

**Digital brand safety and viewability: A guide to protecting online brand
reputation from a South African perspective**

by

Jared Hendricks

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

Master of Marketing

in the Faculty of Business and Management Sciences

at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology

Supervisor: Dr Pieter Steenkamp

Cape Town

July 2023

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J. Hendricks
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Date

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study to contribute to the existing body of knowledge regarding digital brand safety and viewability in South Africa. Brand safety and viewability have become increasingly important topics for marketers and media practitioners to adhere to in their digital marketing campaigns.

The rationale behind this study is that industry professionals in the marketing and media industries will benefit from this study as the proposed topic could lead to further investigation focussing on the roles played by certain factors or focusing on specific determinants of digital brand safety and viewability more in-depth.

Negative associations in the online environment could impact a brand's reputation. In-depth interviews were conducted with participants from the media and marketing industry in South Africa, either in person or via Microsoft Teams. Deductive reasoning was used, and this study made use of an exploratory research design. Participants also provided additional information which contributed to the body of knowledge.

A framework for the process of brand safety is provided, as well as a framework for the process of viewability. This study found that the theory provided by the *IAB SA White Paper on brand safety in today's digital context* (2019) and the *IAB SA White Paper on viewability in today's digital context* (2019) is confirmed by the experience of marketing and media practitioners in South Africa.

As the white papers for both the topic of brand safety and viewability are confirmed by the experience media practitioners, this ensures that best practice is followed and that conversely a process for brand safety and viewability is provided to further enhance the body of knowledge regarding these two topics.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank:

- Dr Pieter Steenkamp, for his patience and guidance throughout this process.
- The participants, for their eagerness to assist with this study.
- My family and friends, for their support and understanding.
- Dentsu South Africa, for funding me for the last few years.

DEDICATION

to

Firstly: to myself as a reminder that all things are possible through God's Grace.

Secondly: to my friends and family, for their support, understanding and love.

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GLOSSARY

Blacklist	A list of sites and publishers on which advertisers would not have their campaigns served (Lee, 2017).
Bots	Digital machines which complete actions and view advertisements, adding up to the total impressions for the campaign (Hughes, 2019).
Brand associations	Perceptions about a brand held by consumers through their memories of the brand. This can be broken up into three categories: attributes, benefits and attitudes. Attributes are features which can be used to describe the brand. Benefits are the individual value linked to the attributes. Attitudes are the individual's overall perception of the brand (Keller, 1993:3).
Brand reputation	The average perception of external members on the attributes of the company (Veloutsou & Moutinho, 2009:315).
CPC	A costing model which charges advertisers for every time a user clicks on their advertisement (Yamaguchi, 2014).
CPM	A costing model which charges advertisers for every 1 000 impressions gained for the campaign (Yamaguchi, 2014).
CPV	A costing model which charges advertisers for every video view on a video campaign (Yamaguchi, 2014).
Digital brand safety	Strategies used to ensure that the online advertisements of a brand do not conflict with its overall mission, image or goals (IAB South Africa, 2018).
IAS	According to IAS (n.d.), IAS stands for Integral Ad Science, which is a third-party measurement tool used to compile a brand safety and viewability report for an online advertising campaign.
Impressions	A metric used to determine the number of views a digital advertisement has received (Tatoris, 2014).
Inventory	The type of media space available to buyers when purchasing media (Allen, 2019).
MOAT	A third-party measurement tool used to compile a brand safety and viewability report for a campaign (IAB South Africa, 2018).
SEM	Search engine marketing
SEO	Search engine optimisation
Programmatic	A method of purchasing media space efficiently through the use of software (Allen, 2019).
Target bids	A bidding amount set by digital media buyers (Allen, 2019).
Viewability	The number of impressions which have come from actual views of an online campaign (IAB South Africa, 2018).

Whitelist

A list of sites and publishers on which advertisers would want to have their campaigns served (Lee, 2017).

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION, PROBLEM STATEMENT, OBJECTIVES, AND METHOD

1.1 Introduction

Brand safety has become an increasingly important topic for companies operating and advertising in the digital space. The problem or topic of brand safety is one which affects multiple parties, namely digital publishers/sites, media owners, media agencies and the brand itself.

The question around digital brand safety first arose in the mid-2010s when advertisements were being placed alongside Al-Qaeda or ISIS YouTube videos and “fake news” articles. These ill-placed advertisements were indirectly funding the terrorist organisations and seen to be supporting propaganda (Marvin, 2017). This caused a negative public perception for these brands and has thus made brands and media agencies more cautious about the digital context in which these advertisements are placed.

This rise in concern throughout the industry has led to the rise in digital brand safety tools like Peer 39, MOAT and Integral Ad Sciences in order to track and verify the brand safety rating of a campaign and its media placements. Despite the importance of digital brand safety and the consequences of a brand’s digital advertisements being placed in the wrong context with the possibility of negatively impacting the reputation and public associations of the brand, little research was found on this topic. In fact, the initial information search revealed no research studies on the topics of digital brand safety and viewability.

The dominance of social media platforms and the plethora of user-generated content and the links of this kind of content to brands has meant that it has become increasingly more likely for a brand to have its name associated with content which does not fit with its identity, as users are able to publish fake news articles and have them spread through social media. According to Social Media Today (2019), Facebook has introduced brand safety Certification, which would give marketers the power to evaluate which contexts and in which environment their advertisements will be shown. These tools have been introduced and will gravitate towards video advertisements, as the major social media platform aims to maximise its advertisement income on its video formats (Blustein, 2019).

In my experience in the digital media industry, there has been an increasing use of digital brand safety tools by brands which have understood its importance, although these products have been emphasized in certain industries and for clients with larger budgets to accommodate these extra costs.

The topics of brand safety and viewability are linked as they are both generally new concepts to marketing, and more specifically digital marketing.

Brand safety and viewability have attracted attention from the digital media industry from the mid-2010s, with both topics focussing on transparency within the industry and ensuring that the brand receives the agreed upon quality of impressions, as well as in digital environments which would not harm the brand.

The definitions of brand safety and viewability, the two core topics of this study are also re-introduced here.

The IAB White Paper on brand safety in today's digital context defines brand safety as "Strategies used to ensure that the online advertisements of a brand do not conflict with its overall mission, image or goals" (IAB SA, 2018).

Viewability is described as "the number of impressions which have come from actual views of an online campaign" (IAB SA, 2019).

Finally, brand reputation is defined as the average perception of external members on the attributes of the company (Veloutsou & Moutinho, 2009:315).

As per the title of the study, I will investigate the potential impact of digital brand safety and viewability on the reputation of brands from the perspective of industry professionals in South Africa, seeing as there is limited knowledge on these topics as it relates to brand reputation.

1.2. Problem statement

The problem is that limited research has been conducted about digital brand safety and viewability. The topics of brand safety and viewability are important to advertisers as their brand being misaligned to unwanted content and have their advertisements not be seen by their audiences – while still paying for exposure, can have a negative impact both on the association of the brand, as well as advertising return on investment. This problem is located within brand management theory with a focus on the digital application of its principles. It has no geographic boundaries as it is not specific to a certain location only. The research problem affects all brand owners and custodians, as negative associations can severely damage a brand in the mind of consumers.

1.3. Research aim

This study aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge regarding digital brand safety and viewability in South Africa, as well as the development of a digital brand safety and viewability process.

1.4. Research objectives

1.4.1. Primary research objective

The primary research objective of the current study was to develop a digital brand safety and viewability process, from a South African perspective.

1.4.2. Secondary research objective

There were several secondary research objectives for this study, namely:

1. To assess industry professionals' understanding of digital brand safety and viewability.
2. To describe industry role players' knowledge, implementation and concerns of the topics discussed in the *IAB SA White Paper on brand safety in today's digital context* (IAB SA, 2018).
3. To describe industry role players' knowledge, implementation and concerns of the topics discussed in the *IAB SA White Paper on viewability in today's digital context* (2019).
4. To develop definitions of brand safety and viewability, taking into account industry professionals' practical definitions of these terms.

1.5. Research questions

In order to achieve the research objectives, the research questions were formulated. This is because providing a hypothesis for this qualitative study would not be appropriate.

The research questions which were constructed to address the problem statement are categorised as primary research questions and secondary research questions as per the objectives.

1.5.1. Primary research question

Which factors that are responsible for determining digital brand safety constitute a digital brand safety and viewability framework?

1.5.2. Secondary research questions

1. What is the understanding of industry professionals of the topic of digital brand safety and viewability?
2. How is brand safety achieved for your client/brand? What are the steps followed in order to ensure that advertisements of the brand are brand safe?
3. What are the industry role players' knowledge, implementation and concerns of the topics discussed in the *IAB SA White Papers* (IAB SA, 2018; 2019)?
4. How are brand safety and viewability defined?

1.6. Research paradigm, method and design

1.6.1. Research paradigm

The paradigm for this research study will be the interpretive research paradigm. The interpretive paradigm deals with the comprehension of a specific topic through the experiences and knowledge of others (Alharthi & Rehman, 2016:51-59). In this study, the focus is on the experiences and knowledge of those in the marketing and media industry of the topic of digital brand safety and viewability. These will include individuals of varying opinions and viewpoints, including media agencies, brand representatives, media owners and other role-players.

1.6.2. Research method

The research method used for this study will be that of deductive reasoning. Hyde (2000:82-89) explains that this is described as a way of reasoning whereby the conclusion is only considered true through the supply of information in order to solidify the conclusion. Therefore, through the information supplied by the chosen participants, facts will be gathered regarding the topic of digital brand safety and a conclusion reached through these facts presented.

A reason why deductive reasoning is used as the method, is that the premise for this study has been based on the *IAB SA White Paper on brand safety in today's digital context* (IAB SA, 2018) and the *IAB SA White Paper on viewability in today's digital context* (2019) – upon which this study will further enhance the existing body of knowledge by extracting the opinions and experiences from participants.

The research will be qualitative as the main objective would be to gain insight from participants and to understand the topic from their view (Palmer & Bolderston, 2006:16-19), whereby in the case of this study – the information will be supplied by the participants.

1.6.3. Research design

As the research will be qualitative the research design used for this study will be an exploratory research design. Stebbins (2011:1-14) points out that this specific research design can be used for an area or topic which needs further research. As there is little research available on the topic of brand safety and viewability, an exploratory research design will be appropriate for this study.

1.7. Research demarcation

Only professionals or practitioners in the marketing and digital media industries will be targeted in this study. These individuals must be knowledgeable regarding the topics of digital brand safety and viewability. These individuals will be limited to those residing within South Africa, with the majority coming from the city of Cape Town.

1.8. Research significance

This study will add to the body of knowledge concerning the topic of digital brand safety and viewability in South Africa with factors that may be unique to South African audiences and brands. Industry professionals in the marketing and media industries will benefit from this study as well, especially in terms of the local brands and audiences that they serve. The topic focuses on the roles played by certain factors or on specific determinants of digital brand safety and viewability in more detail.

The expected outcomes of this study would be to add to the theory in terms of brand management and brand safety in general and in South Africa specifically. Another expected outcome of this study is to develop a guide to aid industry professionals on how to best achieve digital brand safety for their brands or clients. This could be achieved by evaluating the Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB) *SA White Papers* guidelines amongst various industry role-players and the definitions and concerns regarding this topic. This study could help further define and highlight the issue of Brand safety and Viewability in the media industry in South Africa.

1.9. Review of literature

In the two literature review chapters, internet advertising is discussed – include the different types of internet advertising such as Search engine marketing (SEM), Search engine optimisation (SEO), display advertising, mobile advertising and social media advertising.

These types of advertising are also discussed in relation to the topics of brand safety and viewability. Since SEO is not linked to paid media and is an organic type of advertising, this form is only listed in this section of the study.

The growth forecast of digital advertising is also mentioned, highlighting the magnitude of the industry. Therefore, considering the size of the digital paid advertising industry and the number of brands which use digital platforms, it emphasizes the issue of brand safety and viewability. The brand equity model is also introduced, and the various steps are discussed. The steps which relate most to brand safety and viewability were imagery and salience respectively.

The concept of brand reputation is also defined and the factors which lead to it are discussed including product quality, customer service proficiency, marketing and advertising, and corporate social responsibility initiatives.

The digital marketing funnel is also introduced in the literature review – with awareness the first phase of the marketing funnel and the final phase being customer retention.

The topic of awareness in the context of digital marketing is discussed and the costing models most generally used for digital marketing campaigns are introduced.

The topic of brand safety is discussed in another chapter in the literature review, including various definitions, the importance of the topic as it relates to digital advertising and its various placements, programmatic advertising, brand safety and social media, and finally, brand safety tools.

In the final section of the literature review, the topic of viewability is explained. The topic of viewability is defined, as well as the importance of the topic as it relates to digital campaigns and transparency, and the challenges of tracking viewability for campaigns are highlighted.

1.10. Overview of the chapters

Chapter one: The current chapter provides the problem statement and a summarised background of the topic being studied. The primary and secondary research objectives are introduced, followed by the primary and secondary research questions. Further to this, the research paradigm, method and design are discussed.

Chapter two: This chapter begins the literature review and discusses internet advertising and the various forms of advertising (mobile, social media, etc). This chapter also looks at search engine marketing and search engine optimisation and how these form part of the digital marketing landscape.

Chapter three: This chapter focuses on the topic of digital brand safety and viewability. From a holistic point of view, internet advertising is discussed, including the various forms of internet advertising, such as social media advertising and mobile advertising. Further to this, the digital marketing funnel is introduced, as well as the various costing models used for digital advertising.

For the section which focusses on viewability, the definitions of the topic are discussed, as well as the importance and challenges regarding viewability.

Chapter four: This chapter outlines the marketing research process followed for this study. The research methods, design and approach are discussed. The qualitative research methods are evaluated, with the most appropriate chosen for this study. Finally, the interview guide is introduced at the end of this chapter.

Chapter five: The findings are presented and analysed and discussed against the research objectives. It is determined if the research questions are answered.

Chapter six: Managerial and strategic recommendations are provided in this chapter. The framework for digital brand safety and viewability is introduced.

CHAPTER TWO: INTERNET ADVERTISING

2.1. Introduction

To create context, the literature review begins with a discussion of internet advertising, the different types of internet advertising, forecast growth and costing models of internet advertising in general.

I will also unpack the brand equity model and how the model would relate to the topics of brand safety and viewability.

2.2. Internet advertising

Since the internet's inception, there have been several ways for a business to communicate its offering and build its brand online (Ganot, 2017). In this chapter, the various types of internet advertising, forecast growth and costing models of internet advertising will be discussed. I also investigate the digital marketing funnel, awareness in the digital context and specific costing models relating to the different stages to digital marketing campaigns. This will provide an overall view of internet advertising as the foundation of brand safety and viewability.

2.2.1. Types of internet advertising

The various types of advertising on the internet can be divided into two broad categories, paid and unpaid (organic) forms of advertising. Paid advertising has been compared to brands essentially purchasing the attention of the intended audience, whereas the organic advertising approach is viewed as a more long-term approach by marketers.

These two groups comprise native advertising, search engine marketing (SEM), display advertising, mobile advertising, social advertising, retargeting and remarketing, email marketing, digital signage and video marketing (Horbal et al., 2017:39). In this study and pertaining to the topics of brand safety and viewability, I will focus on the topics of SEM, search engine optimisation (SEO), display advertising, mobile advertising, social advertising and video marketing.

It is widely prescribed that brands make use of a holistic approach and incorporate as many elements of online advertising as possible in order to achieve their digital marketing objectives. SEM and SEO refer to the paid and organic strategies used to increase website traffic of the brand (Murphy, 2022; Serran, 2022).

2.2.1.1. Search engine marketing

SEM refers to search engagements or visibility using paid advertisements on various search engines such as Yahoo, Google, Bing, etc. (Mottola, 2019). SEM therefore is a method whereby digital marketers pay search engines for a certain level of exposure. Keywords are chosen by brands to target consumers against the search terms they use. These keywords would be relevant to the brand in terms of their category of product or service, if there were a competitor the brand would like to target, the region the brand would like to target, etc. (Nyagadza, 2020:4; Terrance et al., 2018:155-156). Terrance et al. (2018:156) also point out that SEM is an important tactic incorporated by brands operating in the digital space, as search is a key indicator of intent by consumers, and is an explicit action undertaken by the user. Search can also be described as a barometer of the brand's overall advertising efforts. If a consumer is interested in a promotion or message that was engaged with previously through a different medium, the consumer would then search for more information on the brand and its offering.

2.2.1.2. Search engine optimization

SEO entails enhancing a website in order to increase its quality and ranking on the results page of the search engine. This would ensure that the brand can be easily found by individuals searching for its products and services (Al Mukhtar et al., 2021:69). This is an organic method of attracting audiences to the brand's site. As with SEM, keywords are an important factor to consider when incorporating a SEO strategy.

SEM and SEO are vital strategies for the online success of any business as these ensure the company's website is ranked higher on the search engine results pages, meaning it is easier to be found for prospective customers searching for the business or the products which it offers (Forsey, 2019).

One difference between the two strategies is that when incorporating SEM, the search results would appear as an advertisement, whereas the outcomes of SEO do not. Another difference between the two is that when a user clicks on the advertisement, the marketer pays for SEM. A further difference between the two strategies is that SEM strategies can be utilised as a short-term tactic, in order to compete with competitors for a certain time period, a chocolate company targeting keywords over the Valentine's Day weekend for example, while SEO is an ongoing tactic incorporated by many brands in order to ensure that the website of the company is ranked high on the search engine's results page.

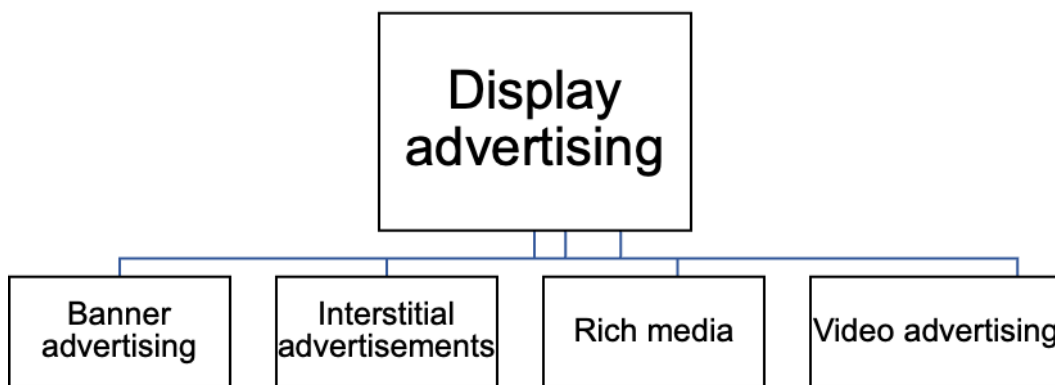
For category leaders and challenger brands alike, investing in these strategies is of utmost importance due to the increased speed through which users pass through the online marketing funnel (see 2.4 below for further explanation).

For the purposes of this study, however, I will not venture further into the topics of digital brand safety and viewability as they pertain to SEM and SEO as there is not a strong connection between these strategies and topics.

2.2.1.3. Display advertising

Display advertising is one of the more popular online advertising methods. This online method can be described as a means of inducing the audience to click on an advertisement in order to perform an action on the website (Goldfarb & Tucker, 2011:5). There are many categories of display advertising: banner, interstitial, rich media, and video advertisements, as shown in Figure 2.1 below.

Figure 2.1. A breakdown of display advertising



Source: BasuMallick (2021)

Banner advertisements

These advertisements traditionally appear on various websites or applications as “banners” or “posters” (Whatley, 2019). The goal of banner advertisements generally is to draw the attention of the audience to the visual element, enticing the user to click on it, which will then take them to the landing page (Lee & Ahn, 2012:120).

Interstitial advertisements

These describe the advertisements that display as individuals are waiting for their original website page to load. Interstitial advertisements are generally placed at transition moments, when the user moves from one screen to another (Yüce et al., 2019:37).

Rich media

Sharma (2023) points out that rich media advertisements utilise interchangeable elements, incorporating audio, video and even options which can be clicked on.

Video advertising

With YouTube at the forefront of video advertising since the early days of social media, this format has been used on a myriad websites and other social media platforms. Brands opt to use videos as they aid in storytelling and users can learn more about products and brands.

With the variety of display advertising methods, digital marketers can connect with their target audience in various ways. As display advertising is the more common of the digital methods used, it will be explored this further in this study, as it relates to digital brand safety and viewability.

In this study, it will also be determined if there is any relationship between digital brand safety and viewability and the advertising format used in a campaign, as the research does not explicitly highlight any display advertising formats which are linked to these two topics.

This is, as per the problem statement, which is introduced earlier, there is insufficient literature regarding brand safety.

2.2.1.4. Mobile advertising

Mobile advertising is a term which refers to any form of advertising which occurs on a mobile device such as smartphones, tablets, etc. (Althuwaini et al., 2018:93; Kenton, 2023). With the boom in technology, this has provided consumers with an array of options regarding how these individuals consume media. It has been widely confirmed that mobile devices are now used for most media consumption for the average individual. Schilling (2023) points out that in keeping with this consumer trend, many brands have subsequently adapted their advertising campaigns to reach these individuals on their mobile devices. This is evident by the investment in this channel, as companies have invested over \$US 270 billion in 2020, with this figure expected to reach almost \$US 500 billion by the year 2024, according to Statista (n.d.).

Originally, mobile advertising made use of text message advertisements, with brands incorporating more innovative solutions such as images and videos as the technology became more advanced.

According to App Annie, the global estimate for the average time users spend on their mobile phone is 4.8 hours, meaning that on average, individuals spend 20% of their day on mobile devices (Chadwick, 2022). The fact that consumers always have a mobile device on hand, coupled with the amount of time users spend on their mobile phones, as well as the array of advertising formats available due to the growth in technology, leads to the opportunity of mobile advertising.

Another key finding is provided by Freer (2022), in which the research conducted by IAB Europe with more than 150 industry professionals, more than 65% of advertisers which incorporate mobile advertising in their campaigns agree that brand safety is imperative for their brand campaigns.

With the exponential growth of mobile use and therefore mobile advertising, brands have continued to focus on mobile devices to communicate with consumers – and seeing as industry professionals agree that brand safety is indeed imperative for mobile campaigns, this study will further investigate this in the coming sections.

Therefore, through this study's focus on viewability and other factors such as mobile advertising – this highlights its distinct qualities, especially seeing as frequent mobile device usage and mobile device advertising.

2.2.1.5. Social media advertising

Brands are unable to reach all their followers on social media platforms without purchasing media space from the social media platform which allows their branded posts or advertisements to reach a certain number of views.

Advertising on social media platforms has become increasingly important for brands as these platforms ensure brands have a way of interacting with prospective consumers and leading these individuals to their website in order to complete favourable actions like signing up to a newsletter or making purchases on the site (Kim, 2019).

According to WeAreSocial UK (n.d.), through findings presented by Global Web Index of internet users aged 16 to 64 years globally, there are more than 4 billion social media users in the world, an increase of around 10% between 2019 and 2020. With a total population of around 8 billion people in the world, this means that 1 in every 2 people has a social media account. The vast reach provided by social media means marketers can communicate their messaging to a large audience, while with the unique targeting capabilities, these marketers are also able to further define their target audience via a range of categories which other, more traditional media channels would not have.

Social platforms are popular for brands seeking to build awareness on digital platforms, as these channels have high reach figures across many markets, and marketers can access these

audiences at a reduced cost compared to other, more traditional marketing mediums such as television and radio.

Another advantage of advertising on social media is the shareability of the platform, with users likely to engage with and share posts which resonate with them, therefore allowing for the possibility for users to engage with and forward branded messages with their followers.

Ultimately, given the type of posts and people a social media user engages with more regularly, the more this user will see similar types of posts, as will the same people on their newsfeeds. For example, if the user engages with and shares funny videos regularly, additional funny videos will appear on their newsfeed every time they use the social media app. If a user only interacts with certain friends on their social media account, the posts of these friends will show up first on the user's newsfeed.

Many social media platforms use this method of tailoring the newsfeed to the user's actions for two reasons. First, to ensure the user keeps engaging on the application and coming back to the social media application, and secondly and probably more importantly, to sell marketers advertising space on its platform. And the more the user engages with and views content on the application, the more advertisements this individual will have the opportunity to scroll past. The growth of social media has seen the increase of user-generated content across the internet. As individuals can share pictures, videos, articles, etc., this content can be shared further amongst their friend group and possibly beyond the individual's social circle (Dandekar et al., 2018:884).

Many brands use this form of communication, especially across social media channels as this can be seen as a form of peer-to-peer marketing, and consumers on these channels can be influenced by these messages. For example, a mother can make a video showing first-time mothers how to securely put a nappy on their babies with the new Pampers nappies. Leung et al. (2022:3) highlight the fact that marketers yield positive results through the association and influence of popular online individuals, with their messaging being seen as more authentic and less like a brand advertisement.

The increase of digital users producing their own content has led to these individuals generating and sharing information, and the more this information is consumed and shared on the social media platforms, the more likely social media platforms would place advertisements in the context of these posts, in order to have the advertisement seen. However, many of these users do not fact-check their information, and in many instances the sources of information are unclear. Brands have thus become more wary of aligning themselves with this type of content. Yet it is unclear what steps brand custodians and implementation teams alike undertake in order to ensure the safety of the brand in the social environment. This study investigates this further in Chapter 6.

The popularity and effectiveness of SEM and social media advertising have grown to such an extent that the two leaders in this area, Google and Facebook, are the two largest digital corporations and earn the most digital advertising revenue. This makes the two organizations competitors to each other, even though Facebook is not a search engine like Google (Spangler, 2020).

Although the growth of social media and the number of users which frequent these platforms can be a positive way for brands to engage with their intended target audiences, this would conversely increase the potential of negative placements for which their brands could be displayed.

Stokel-Walker (2023) also highlights that new platforms would be deemed as uncharted territory, and therefore brands may be tentative to advertise on these platforms without the necessary processes in place.

2.3. Forecast growth

According to Wiltshire (2019), digital marketing spend is set to account for around half of total media expenditure in the next few years. This could be due to the many benefits of digital marketing as opposed to traditional media. Engberg (2019) predicted that in 2023 digital media budgets made up more than 60% of total media spend. Fuxman et al. (2014:60) add that majority of digital spend went to technology giants Google and Facebook. The interconnectivity of social sites and e-commerce sites affords marketers and agencies ways to track the consumer journey and present them with the opportunity to communicate effectively to consumers along these touchpoints with tailored messages for each stage.

From its humble beginnings, internet advertising has grown exponentially over the last few decades. Since the inception of the internet, email marketing messages were the focus of a company's digital efforts, and evolved to an important aspect of digital marketing, playing alongside search, social, display and other forms of advertising. Now however, email plays a smaller role, only a component in the overall digital marketing efforts of a firm (Digital Marketing Institute, 2016).

Wang et al. (2008:29-38) expresses how voice search is on the rise in advertising. A search input is given by the user and is matched to a certain field in a database. Sweeney (2019) indicates that around a third of website activity had been conducted using voice-only search in 2018, this was presented by a study shared by Kantar Media. It has been predicted that around 50% of all searches has been conducted using voice searches in the year 2020, and this figure is expected to increase in the future. Internet companies have begun expanding their advertising offerings to potential marketers as well. Search engines such as Google and Yahoo have begun placing a larger importance on voice search capabilities of websites. This could

see many brands focusing on ensuring that they have optimized their websites for voice-search functionalities (Sarhan, 2014:40-44).

The internet continues to grow at an excessive rate. The increase of internet functions, as well as the increase of daily users and investment by brands, means this channel will continually be seen as valuable for marketers.

The growth of internet advertising is an important aspect to highlight for this study. Although I will not focus on this subject further on in this thesis, it is nevertheless imperative to bring attention to the vastness of this form of advertising and the investment which it attracts.

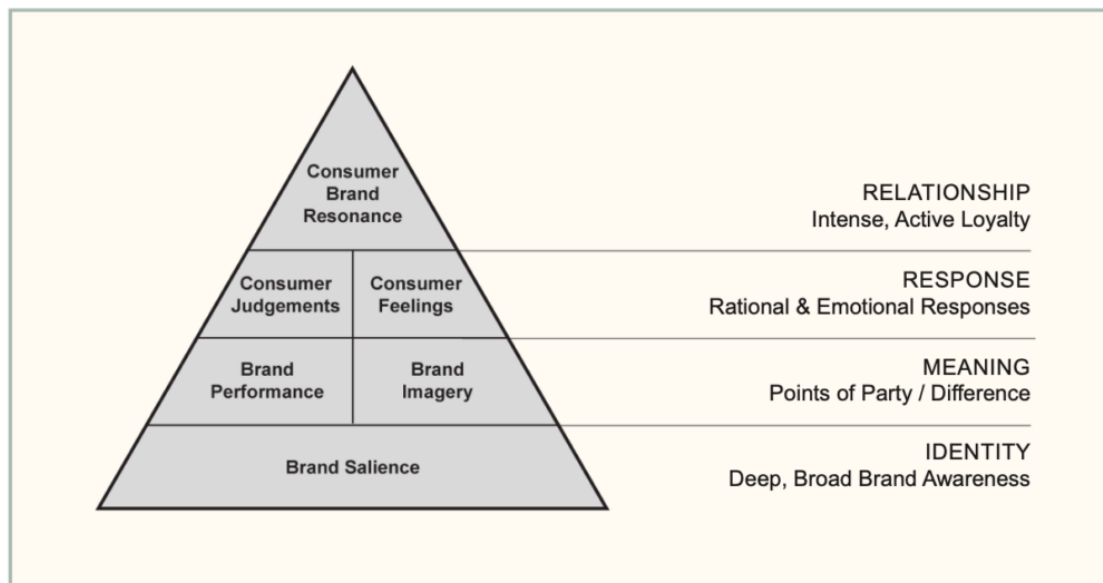
This subsequently also underlines the importance of viewability and how this can be achieved, with advertisements being placed in correct environments – this would yield stronger results for brands and therefore ensuring continued investment in and growth for these channels.

2.4. The brand equity model

A key framework is the Keller's brand equity framework, which has been developed to highlight the path to build and effectively maintain strong brands which consumers have distinct associations with (Keller, 1993; Jacob, 2023).

The framework includes six levels or stages, namely: brand salience, brand performance, brand imagery, consumer feelings, consumer judgements and finally consumer brand resonance. Mehta (2022) explains that this is also in sequential order, with one stage necessary to attain before achieving the next level of brand equity – in other words, a brand would have to achieve salience first, and only then can the brand build associations have linked to performance and imagery.

Figure 2.2: Keller's Consumer Brand Equity Model.



Source: Mehta (2022)

2.4.1. Brand Salience

Brand salience is the first level in the Consumer Based Brand Equity model, and it speaks to the brand achieving a strong level of top-of-mind awareness amongst consumers (Hawker, 2019) (Riserbato, 2023).

In terms of the topics of this study, the concept of viewability would be closely associated with Brand salience as it relates to the model produced by Keller.

This is because, as with viewability or the lack thereof, the brand is unable to build awareness of its messaging and its products if the communications are not being seen by consumers.

This then also does not allow the brand to further build its imagery, performance, etc. as its advertisement was not seen – and therefore the base level of awareness is not achieved.

2.4.2. Brand Imagery

Brand Imagery is the second level in the Consumer Based Brand Equity model. This phase of the CBBE framework focuses on the associations and perceptions of the brand in the minds of the consumers (Popovic, 2021).

It is important for brands to build associations and ensure that it has built a unique identity for its consumers (Bhasin, 2023).

Relating to the topic of brand safety, brand imagery would be the appropriate stage of the model – as the associations connected to a brand has to be carefully cultivated and negative

associations should be avoided in order to continually enhance the image of the brand in the eyes of its consumers.

2.4.3. Brand performance

The third stage of the Consumer Based Brand Equity model is brand performance. This stage deals with meeting the needs of the consumer through the product or service functions of the brand.

Mupeti (2022) explains that the performance of a brand highlights the value of the brand against other alternatives. A superior offering means that a brand could be able to charge a premium, conversely a brand which produces only a standard offering to customers would have to charge a lower price – but this might also be a point to attract consumers.

Frampton (2020) highlights that the brand performance level includes the below indicators:

- primary characteristics and features
- product reliability, durability, and serviceability
- service effectiveness, efficiency, and empathy
- style and design
- price

All of the factors above would determine how consumers react to the brand in terms of their feelings and judgements – which are the next two levels of the framework.

2.4.4. Consumer judgements

The fourth stage of consumer judgements incorporates the opinions which consumers have towards the brand. These opinions can be either positive or negative. For example, if a consumer feels the products of the brand are of inferior quality, then the judgement would be negative (De Moor, 2023).

It is important to note that these could be subjective and might vary from consumer to consumer – however these opinions are still important.

A consumer's opinion of a brand is consisted of four segments:

- Quality – this is the perceived or actual quality of the brand
- Credibility – deals with the reputation of the brand
- Consideration – deals with how relevant the brand is.
- Superiority – how the brand is viewed against its competitor set.

It is also important to note that an individual would not have to experience the brand themselves in order to form an opinion – opinions can also be shared via word of mouth, and these can be adopted by consumers as their own judgement (Ning, 2022).

Consumer judgements are related to the topic of brand safety, as if the associations which are linked to the brand are not appreciated by consumers – this would affect the brand's credibility in their eyes.

2.4.5. Consumer feelings

This section of the brand equity model speaks to how consumers feel about the brand.

Keller (1993) lists six brand feelings, all of which are positive, which companies should strive to illicit in their consumers:

- Fun
- Warmth
- Excitement
- Security
- Social approval
- Self-respect

A brand should not aim to evoke all the above feelings but can perhaps target one or two and focus all their marketing efforts to communicate these with their consumers (Frampton, 2020). Popovic (2021) highlights that ensuring the brand is linked to positive feelings in the mind of the consumer is vitally important to foster customer-based brand equity.

This stage of the customer-based brand equity model would not be associated with brand safety and is only listed to provide further context of the model.

2.4.6. Brand resonance

This is the final stage of the customer-based brand equity model as presented by Keller.

In this stage, a customer is loyal to the brand and is more likely to recommend the brand to others.

The previous stages of the brand equity model all lead to the resonance stage.

Hawker (2019) points out that during the brand resonance stage, consumers associate themselves with the brand and in doing so – a strong relationship with the brand is built.

The consumer relationship with the brand is so strong at this stage, that the consumer remains loyal to the brand and will not purchase a competitor's products and will even advocate for the brand amongst their peers.

It is key to note however, that the brand resonance stage is not applicable to the topic of brand safety.

2.5. Brand reputation

Brand reputation can be defined as the renowned identity of the brand and involves how the employees, customers and partners perceive the brand through various interactions (Vestil, 2023).

Bhasin (2023) highlights that a beneficial brand reputation can lead to sustained market sales, increased consumer loyalty and can entice additional customers.

McLachlan (2023) points out that there are various factors which affect the reputation of a brand in the minds of consumers – including the quality of products or services, customer service proficiency, corporate social responsibility, and marketing and advertising.

Quality of products or services

Caramela (2023) describes that the quality of products or services provided by a company is an important factor which can further develop a positive brand reputation and sales.

Product and service offerings of superior quality ensure that customers are satisfied with their purchase and lead to positive customer reviews, loyalty and potential brand advocacy.

Customer service proficiency

Customer services is defined as the support and assistance which the brand provides its customers before, during and after the customer has made a purchase.

Customers place value on brands which provide strong communication, quick responses and problem solving skills

A brand which is renowned for good customer service is more likely to attract and retain customers.

Corporate social responsibility

Customers have increasingly become aware of the effects which companies have on the environment around them. Corporate social responsibility involves taking into account the environmental and social impact which the operations of the business has on society, as well as implementing steps to positively giving back to society (Reckmann, 2023).

Customers may also be more inclined to purchase from or do business with brands who have strong corporate social responsibility initiatives.

Marketing and advertising

Marketing and advertising are key business operations, which have a strong influence on consumer perceptions and reputation of a brand. Marketing and advertising techniques are valuable channels for businesses to communicate their key offerings to consumers.

Consistent advertising and communication with the consumers on why the brand and their offering is unique can also help build the reputation of the brand (Bano, 2023).

Through the findings of this study, I will determine the relationship between digital brand safety and brand reputation, as well as the mechanics surrounding effectively protecting brand reputation through brand safety measures.

2.6. The digital marketing funnel

The digital marketing funnel is similar to the orthodox marketing funnel in various ways. The steps are sequential and are in the following order: awareness, interest, consideration, conversion, customer relationship and retention.

Anumolu et al. (2015:256) explain that awareness is the first step in the process, consumers should know the brand and what is being proposed before they can move further down the funnel. Following awareness of the brand and its offering, the individual would build an interest in this and subsequently add the brand into his/her consideration set, including competing brands/services which the consumer then converts and purchases his favoured option.

Išoraitė (2016:321) states that for many brands, just as it is for above-the-line (traditional mass media) marketers, building awareness amongst the intended digital target audience is crucial, as brands continually seek to communicate their ideologies and product offerings to their consumers.

The speed at which the internet operates, due to the integration of internet and mobile banking, has seen this process shortened according to many marketers, where awareness can lead straight to conversion (Černikovaite, 2011:968).

2.7. Awareness in a digital context

As with above-the-line advertising, building awareness through digital platforms is of utmost importance to brands, especially as the use of digital devices has grown tremendously.

According to Hootsuite (n.d.), in 2022 there were almost 5 billion internet users globally, with more than 4 billion users active on social media platforms. With many potential customers online for hours every day, it makes sense that marketers target these individuals on these devices.

Awareness is the first step in the digital marketing process, just as it is for the above-the-line process. According to Keller's brand equity model, salience is the first step in brand building, with this being similar to awareness in a digital context as consumers have to recognize the brand first before they will consider purchasing online (Keller, 2009:139-155; Cernikovaite, 2011; Kumar & Palanivelraja, 2018:162).

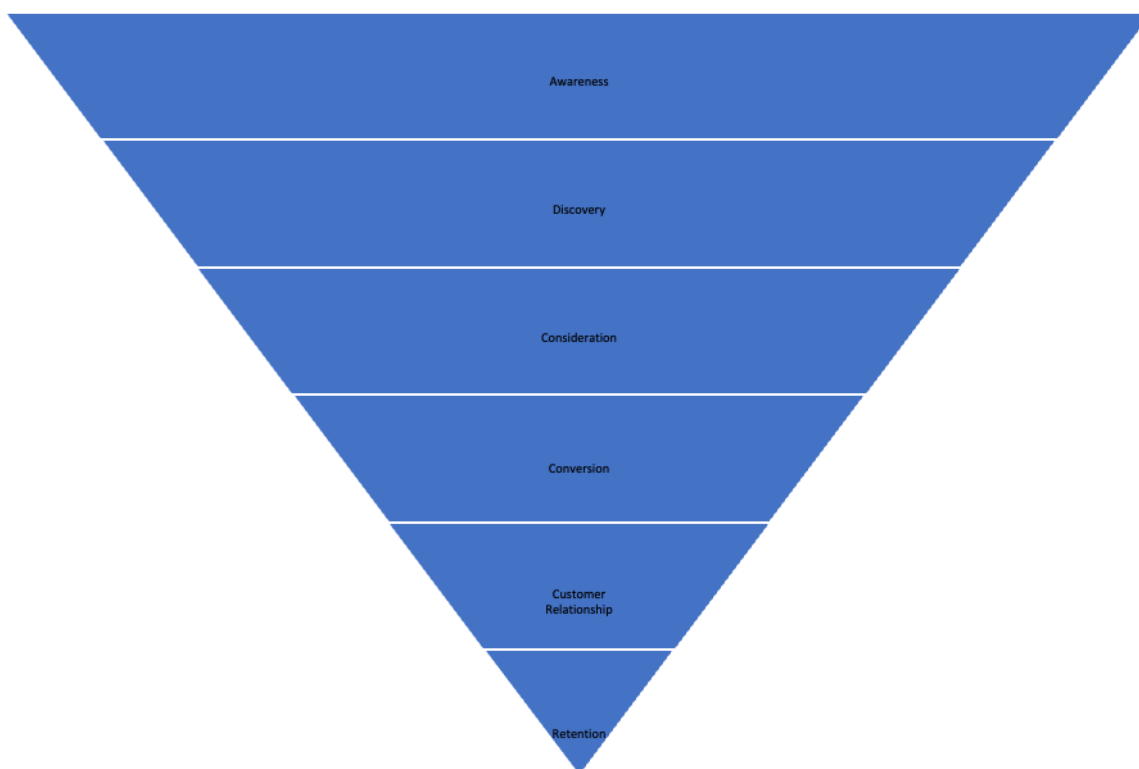
A significant difference between the digital and traditional marketing funnel, however, is the speed with which consumers undergo the process. As with digital marketing campaigns, consumers can be shown a display banner, after which they can conduct an online information search on the product, and shortly purchase it, with the process completed in a fraction of the time as was done previously on non-digital channels.

In terms of its relation to brand safety and viewability, awareness remains closely linked to these topics. There is a strong link between the brand and its environment for consumers, as this plays a part in how the brand is perceived (del Rio et al., 2001:412). Therefore, it is imperative, when building awareness and forming those associations in the minds of consumers, that brands place importance on the context digitally.

2.8. Costing models

There are various costing models used in digital media, which can differ depending on the type of media being promoted by the advertiser: still images, interactive media, videos, text, etc. The three more common costing definitions are CPM, CPC and CPA (Asdemir et al., 2012:804-822).

Figure 2.3: The digital marketing funnel, adapted for this study



Source: Handley (2023)

CPM (cost per thousand impressions) forecasts the number of impressions a campaign is set to deliver. Asdemir et al. (2012:804-822) explain that impressions can be defined as how many individuals have seen the advertisement or how many times the advertisement has been seen. CPM is one of the more popular costing models used in digital media. If an advertisement has R100 CPM, this means the advertiser will have to pay R100 for every 1 000 impressions, irrespective of whether the viewer interacted with the advertisement or not (Jankowski et al., 2016:315-331).

On the other hand, CPC (cost per click) is a costing model used whereby the advertiser only pays when the advertisement has been clicked. This costing model has been preferred by brands with lower budgets as the advertisement can be viewed an unlimited number of times without affecting the budget of the advertiser, therefore increasing awareness – the advertiser is only charged for every click made on the advertisement by the prospective customer (Jankowski et al., 2016:315-331).

CPA (cost per acquisition or action) is a digital media model in which a company would only be charged for a specific action taken by prospective audiences (Pechuán et al., 2014:324-334). This model would be optimal if the goal of the advertiser’s campaign would be to undertake an action like subscribing to a newsletter, filling out an information or lead form with the customer’s details. Cost per acquisition is determined by using the total ad budget for the

campaign divided by the number of conversions achieved, therefore the lower the CPA, the better the campaign performs due to the large number of conversions achieved.

CPV (cost per view) is another popular costing model but is one which is only used with video advertisements or material. The advertiser only pays for each viewer who watches the video content. Statistics for this model can be determined and divided by sections of the video which users watch before disengaging with the content. This could be useful information as advertisers would be able to strategize on where to include important information and call-to-action buttons which could redirect interested viewers.

CPE (cost per engagement) is used to charge advertisers based on the audience's engagement. This would be whether individuals liked, shared or commented on the promoted post. This costing model is more commonly used on social media platforms such as Facebook. CPE would be best used for content which the advertiser would like the audience to engage with, for example, polls, engaging content, etc. Once the campaign has run and the advertiser has an audience of those who have interacted with the advertisement, the advertiser can then create a separate campaign or second burst of the same campaign in order to further target individuals in these audience lists who have positively reacted to the content promoted.

The costing models incorporated will be linked to the overall media objective of the campaign. If the main goal is to build awareness of the campaign, the model used would be CPM in order to ensure the advertisement is shown to as many individuals as possible. However, where if the main goal is more action-oriented, the model will change, for example, to get individuals to click on the advertisement in order to go through to the site and learn more about the product or to purchase the product, the CPC model will be used.

2.9. Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed internet advertising and its various formats. In the upcoming chapters, I will unpack whether these formats have a relationship with brand safety and viewability.

Internet advertising has grown significantly over the last 20 years, as such there have been various methods of advertising available to brands. For the different types of advertising discussed, I will focus on paid media advertising – through both social media and paid media channels and the link these forms of advertising have with brand safety and viewability,

In terms of the costing models used for these advertising campaigns, I will also uncover the most widely used costing model for participants in their campaigns – as well as if there is a perceived relationship between the costing model used and the viewability score achieved.

The brand equity model was also introduced as to where the findings for the topics of brand safety and viewability can be linked to the stage of the model.

CHAPTER THREE: DIGITAL BRAND SAFETY AND VIEWABILITY

3.1. Introduction

This part of the literature review focuses on the two specific topics of this study, namely digital brand safety and viewability. An overview is provided of brand safety and the various definitions of the term, its importance, challenges in programmatic and social media landscapes, and brand safety tools. A definition of viewability is provided, and its importance and challenges are discussed, with a focus on bot traffic.

3.2. Digital brand safety

3.2.1. Definition and overview

The IAB South Africa (IAB SA, 2018) defines brand safety as a strategy used in order to protect the brand by safeguarding its digital advertisements from unwanted contexts which may damage the brand in any way or be clash with the ethos of the brand. Borao (2019) also defines digital brand safety as marketing companies considering the trust of the digital audience by placing their advertisements in the correct contexts. In both definitions mention was made of the context of a brand's digital advertisement, and this remains the underlying theme of digital brand safety.

Table 3.1. Definitions of brand safety

Author	Definition of brand safety
Trustworthy Accountability Group (n.d.)	The controls that companies in the digital advertising supply chain employ to protect brands against negative impacts to the brand's consumer reputation associated with specific types of content, criminal activity, and/or related loss of return on investment.
IAB South Africa (2018)	Brand safety refers to the strategy put into place to help ensure that online advertisements or associations do not appear on websites or in videos and articles that may conflict with a brand's image, mission or goals.
Meglio (2019)	Brand safety is a highly nuanced concept, largely because each brand has a unique view as to what constitutes a safe ad placement. This can be based on their products and core values as well as on the personal values of their customers.
Oracle (n.d.)	Brand safety is protecting the reputation of a brand by ensuring its advertisements are not placed on unsavoury websites, articles, posts, videos, or apps.

From 2017 onwards, the issue of digital brand safety was put under the spotlight as large companies realised their advertisements were found alongside YouTube videos which contained Islamic terrorists' content (Solon, 2017). This controversy caused the video-sharing site a significant loss in advertising revenue as major clients removed their advertisements from the site. With the sheer number of videos uploaded to YouTube, around 500 hours of content within a minute, this presents a major challenge to ensure that advertisers get their messages placed in the correct environment.

Many industry experts blame the issue on the digital buying of media, with programmatic media buying claiming a large part of it. Programmatic is a form of buying media which enlists the aid of an algorithm to automate the buying of digital media space (Allen, 2019). Reagan (2018) points out that programmatic buying has also been described as media owners dumping their unwanted inventory for lower prices, with Google profiting in the early days of programmatic advertising with media buyers still not fully certain of what they were committing to.

In terms of contexts, the global ad industry lists 13 categories to avoid as categories which advertisers should not target or place their advertisements in environments where these topics are mentioned. According to IAB South Africa (IAB SA, 2018), these topics are:

1. Military conflict
2. Obscenity
3. Drugs
4. Tobacco
5. Adult content
6. Arms
7. Crime
8. Death/injury
9. Online piracy
10. Hate speech
11. Terrorism
12. Spam/hateful sites
13. Fake news

Companies and marketing managers can include additional categories to these lists, but in general these topics would be avoided by all brands in order to not be associated in any way with these topics (Jatain, 2021).

If there is an online news article which contains one of these 13 topics as a theme, then there is likely to be no advertising on that page. But it is imperative that marketers use their initiative

in order to establish which categories would be acceptable for their advertisements to be linked to and to include categories outside of the 13 listed above.

Southern (2019) explains that it is the role of all involved in the digital advertising industry to actively ensure that brand safety is a priority as this is a concern which could hinder the growth of the industry as a whole. The task of upholding digital brand safety is one for marketers, online publishers, technology and media agencies.

3.2.2. Importance

Brand safety is a topic of vital importance as with branding, the associations of a brand can either improve or damage the reputation of it in the mind of the public and its target audience (Kowalewicz, 2018).

Monllos (2017) explains that with customers increasingly rallying behind brands which stand for important causes and willing to boycott those which do not have favourable associations, with more than half of customers ready to leave a brand if it contradicts their social stand. This means it is of utmost importance that a brand is cautious of its associations it might carry.

Which is why digital brand safety has become a topic which digital marketers and their colleagues and agency partners need to be aware of and keep in the top of their collective minds.

As more and more customers spend time online and complete the entire decision-making process online this means that digital advertisers must ensure that the context is safe when aiming to reach these digital customers.

With Google and Facebook being the largest market owners digitally, with around 90% of the market share, digital advertisers need to ensure that they are protected from these tech giants controlling the digital advertising landscape. Both companies have been quick to include brand safety controls on their purchasing platforms in order to aid advertisers in finding safe environments to place their advertisements.

With the YouTube brand safety scandal in 2017, Facebook has upped its brand safety controls over its video platforms, this in order to push its video advertising revenue and to avoid the errors made by YouTube.

3.2.3. Challenges

The IAB South Africa (IAB SA, 2018) describes the challenge statement of brand safety as being not how this issue might impact a client or publisher, but the main challenge is achieving a partnership with third-party service providers, publishers, agencies and clients in delivering campaigns which are brand safe and contribute to the growth of the digital marketing industry

and in South Africa specifically. With the YouTube scandal in 2017, marketers are still cautious to advertise on the platform and make use of the programmatic buying method, even as YouTube and digital media trading desks have increased their brand safety controls.

With video becoming an increasingly lucrative platform for both media owners and social media sites, these platforms have increased their efforts to ensure advertisers have the option to select content and the context suitable for their placements (Benes, 2018).

Podnar (2019) further highlights one of the larger challenges regarding the topic of brand safety, a possible trade-off between maximising returns on investment and positive associations in the mind of the consumer. With advertisers having the opportunity to block certain contexts with the aim of ensuring a campaign is brand safe, this limits the amount of digital media inventory and ultimately online customers which the brand has access to. For many digital advertisers, this is a simple choice as safety of the campaign would be prioritised above achieving maximum results over the short term, therefore allowing the brand to meet their digital objectives over the long term through a favourable online customer sentiment.

This study investigates whether there are ways for brands to achieve both brand safety and the optimum campaign results in Chapter 6.

3.2.4. Programmatic advertising

Marshall (2014) describes programmatic advertising as the trading of digital media space using software as opposed to the traditional method which includes a request for proposal, manual insertion orders, and negotiations conducted by humans. This method of purchasing advertising space has been described as significantly more efficient than the traditional method.

This buying method sees the programmatic specialist constructing the shell of the digital campaign, setting the characteristics of the target audience, campaign goal, target bids, etc. Digital media have access to a list of publishers which have been verified, and those which have been preferred by the digital advertiser can be listed on a whitelist, with sites which the advertiser requests to avoid in their entirety would be included on a blacklist (Lee, 2017). Burg (2015) adds that smaller publishers might not have the necessary technology essential to ensure best practice is followed and might not even have the knowledge regarding these topics.

A brand could provide a whitelist and blacklist to its media partner, or the media partner would draw up a list of preferred publishers and require these to be approved by the brand. Programmatic advertising has been widely touted as the buying method of the future, with this buying method already the most widely used in the United States of America. It was predicted that by 2021, programmatic buying would account for almost 90% for all digital advertising spend (Peterson, 2019).

Joseph (2018) explains that various experts predict that this buying method will also become the predominant form of media buying for above-the-line advertising as well, with radio, television and out-of-home all platforms which programmatic marketing could reach. This would all be made possible with the increase in smart devices linked to the internet. This form of media buying has been proven to be effective in terms of its ability to scale, with this method also incorporated in the out-of-home space, with media planners able to purchase digital billboard space programmatically as well. This scale and the ability to contextually target audiences through online content is one of the main benefits for brands which use programmatic advertising as part of their media strategy (Kiran & Arumugam, 2020:3). This study determines if there is a link between programmatic advertising and digital brand safety and viewability in Chapter 6.

3.2.5. Brand safety and social media

The advent of social media has led to many users generating their own content, to be shared amongst friends on social networking sites. Social networking sites also have no control over the type of content which is published by users; only once a piece of content is reported or flagged by another user can it be removed by the social media site. Therefore, the inability of social platforms to control what users post and share leads to uncertainty for brands and the context in which they appear in the social landscape.

Wong (2017) illustrates an example of brand safety in a social space with advertisers and the Russian/US election scandal whereby it is alleged that Russian advertisements influenced the outcome of the election of the United States president. This has led to an industry-wide rally for social media giants to have more control against what type of content is promoted and many of these platforms have offered additional measures for advertisers to block contexts which would be deemed negative for their brand.

3.2.6. Brand safety tools

Due to the issue of brand safety and ensuring that advertisements are placed in the correct context and places which are not damaging to the brand, there has been a rise in brand safety tools developed in order to combat this issue. The IAB SA (2018) has noted the three largest brand safety companies as Peer 39, Integral Ad Science (IAS) and MOAT. Unfortunately, these companies do not make public their methods of achieving brand safety scores; but according to the *IAB SA White Papers* (IAB SA, 2018; 2019) all three of these brand safety tools have the following features:

Pre-bid capabilities: Advertisers or media buyers can put in place certain criteria in order to judge whether the context is suitable for the advertisement to run.

Verification: A tool which enables the advertisements to be tracked whether these have been viewed by real users or by bots. Verification tools acknowledge actual viewability as well as that of the advertisements which have run.

Ad-blocking: This option is available to media buyers who seek to ensure the blocking of advertisements in dubious contexts.

Brand safety tools have become increasingly important; as discussed previously in the costing models section, advertisers and brands are charged for the number of views and engagement a campaign receives with a certain media owner. The brand safety tools help ascertain the correct context for advertisements to be placed and the number of impressions which have been actually viewed by valid traffic, not bots, as advertisers are charged for these impression amounts. The various brand safety tools will then provide a brand safety and viewability score out of 100 which will depend on a number of factors, and each brand safety tool could provide varying scores for the same campaign.

3.2.7. Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I focussed on the two topics which this study is centred on – namely brand safety and viewability.

An overview was provided for the topic of brand safety, including definitions by various sources – which will be used to evaluate against the definitions provided by the participants.

The importance of brand safety has been discussed, and why the topic has become a focus point for many brands in the digital space.

The programmatic and social media landscapes were also deliberated, as well as the unique challenges these channels pose for brands striving for brand safety.

For the topic of viewability, definitions were also provided for this term – which will also be evaluated against those definitions provided by participants.

The importance of viewability was also discussed, highlighting the need for further transparency in the digital marketing ecosystem.

The challenges for viewability were underlined, noting that various third party verification suppliers could provide different grading to the same campaign.

Furthermore, the topic of bot traffic was also mentioned in relation to viewability and how this would affect the viewability score of a campaign. Whereby, without third party viewability tracking – brands might mistake a click for a human consumer engagement, where it was a machine mimicking the actions of a human user.

3.3. Viewability

3.3.1. Definition

Viewability is the idea of how many of the impressions calculated were seen by users. According to Optimizely (n.d.), for an advertisement to be considered as viewed it would need to have at least 50% of the creative content displayed on-screen for one second. For videos, Jabbari (2017) explains that for a video to be considered as viewed it should have at least 50% shown on screen and be played for 2 seconds consecutively. As there are various formats in which advertisements can be displayed, it is important for viewability to be defined for all these different formats.

Advertisements can either be placed “above the fold” or “below the fold” on a screen. Brebion (2022) describes above the fold as the top half of the screen viewable to the user at first glance, and below the fold as the bottom half of the screen which the user would need to scroll up in order to view the advertisement.

3.3.2. Importance

The concept of viewability and whether each impression counted has actually been seen is of utmost importance to the digital advertising industry and improves the accountability for those involved. This is as digital advertisers and marketers pay for impressions and the performance of an advertising campaign. Therefore, if an impression has been counted and charged to the digital advertiser, but not actually seen, it would be a wasted impression; if it had been seen there would be the possibility for further action taken on the advertisement such as a purchase or signing up for a newsletter (O’ Sullivan, 2016).

Schapira (2016) contends that with the very rapid rise in digital advertising spend, digital advertisers have begun seeking further clarity on their investments in this space and have sought for further transparency from digital publishers and online platforms alike in the performance of these advertisements.

Since this concept was introduced to the digital media industry, there has been a concerted effort from both publishers and platforms to provide full transparency in terms of client campaign performance. This has been done because if a brand is not satisfied with the performance of the website, in other words it offers a low viewability rating, the brand would then stop placing its advertisements on these sites due to low return on investment.

3.3.3. Challenges

According to Brookes (2022), third-party tools used to measure viewability such as IAS and MOAT both offer inconsistent scoring when evaluating the same campaign. Digital advertisers have been struggling to come to terms with how various metrics for these measurement tools are calculated, with these service providers cautious to provide too much information as many media agencies could incorporate competitors over various brands.

Wang et al. (2015:3) suggests that online user behaviour should also be considered when reviewing the viewability scores for a campaign, as sometimes the creative content used in a campaign is not compelling enough for social media users specifically to pause on the messaging for a certain period.

Bot traffic is one of the significant obstacles for viewability.

3.3.4. Bot traffic

Kabadaian (2018) describes bots as machines which deliver actions which mimic those of a real online user. When an advertiser receives the final report at the end of a campaign defining its performance, these figures can be deceptive without the use of third-party measurement tools such as MOAT and IAS, as the advertiser would be unaware of which percentage of impressions came from bots and which percentage came from actual humans.

Due to these machines, digital advertisers can spend a significant portion of their budgets to no avail, leading to no online sales, etc. Tiffany (2018) reports that over 75% of advertising fraud originates from bots linked to residential computers and their actions have been developed in such a way as to completely mimic those of humans.

3.3.5. Conclusion

A definition for the term of viewability is described in the beginning of this chapter and I will further investigate the definitions provided by participants for this study in the coming chapters. The importance of the topic of viewability is also discussed and its role in providing transparency to the digital media industry.

The challenges relating to viewability, and its measurement is also discussed, as well as the verification tools used and online user behaviour.

Finally, bot traffic is defined and the importance of third party verification tools are highlighted to discover bots which mimic the behaviour of humans online.

The literature found focused on the topics above relating to viewability, in this study – it will be determined whether there are additional factors which impact viewability.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. Introduction

The research process is described as the methods used to answer the research questions in a study (Goddard & Melville, 2004:1). Kothari (2004:4) points out that the steps taken in this process are sequential and all steps are required, as one step must be completed to proceed. As is highlighted in chapters 2 and 3, it is unknown which factors contribute to digital brand safety and viewability. In this study, I investigate this research problem. To provide an organised approach, the steps incorporated in this study were adapted from the academic research process. The research problem and objectives are re-stated, and thereafter the research paradigm and research approach are discussed. The chosen data collection methods, and interview guides are also subsequently addressed. Finally, the data collection process is explained.

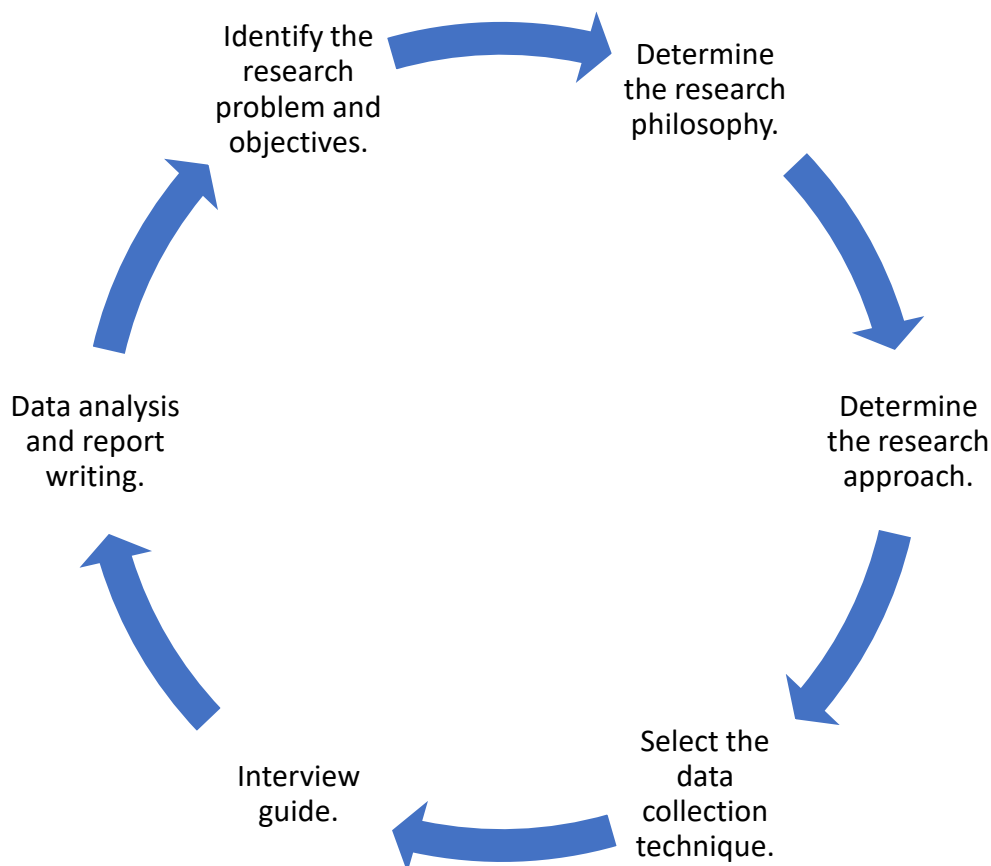


Figure 4.1. Academic research process

Sources: Acq Notes (2022); Bhasin (2023).

4.2. Research problem

The research problem for this study is that limited research has been conducted on digital brand safety and viewability. It is not clear how affected parties (digital publishers/sites, media owners, media agencies and brands) are dealing with the challenge of guarding brand reputations against negative associations, as well as there is no distinct guide on protecting the reputation of a brand. This study therefore advanced the primary and secondary objectives below focused on addressing this research problem.

4.3. Research objectives

4.3.1. Primary research objective

The primary objective is to develop a digital brand safety and viewability guide for the media industry in South Africa.

4.3.2. Secondary research objective

The secondary objectives are to examine industry professionals' understanding of digital brand safety and viewability; to evaluate industry role-players' knowledge and implementation of the topics (brand safety, viewability, ad fraud, contextual categories to avoid) discussed in the *IAB SA White Papers* (IAB SA, 2018; 2019); to evaluate the related concerns of industry professionals; and finally to define brand safety and viewability.

4.3. Research paradigm

The research paradigm is described as the ideology within which the researcher shapes the approach and essentially moulds the research (Keong *et al.*,2021:5858). In order to determine the paradigm, I define the ontological, epistemological, and methodological concepts and then defines and determines the paradigm used in this study.

Ontology is defined as the study of existence. This concept is the study of how people determine if things exist, as well as the category these topics relate to. According to Al-Saadi (2014:2), epistemology is defined as how one can obtain knowledge relating to existence. It has also been defined as the theory of knowledge and is the section of philosophy that deals with knowledge (Crotty,1998:2). Epistemology also is concerned with the construction of concepts.

Moon and Blackman (2017) suggest that ontology and epistemology play an important role as they determine how research is structured to unearth knowledge in certain areas. However, the key differentiator between the two concepts is that ontology is widely recognised as the

research of topics in the universe, whereas epistemology is the study of the methods by which these topics are researched.

The epistemological theory of knowledge is further broken up into positivist, postpositivist, critical theory and constructivist approaches. The positivist paradigm is described as an approach whereby knowledge can be obtained through experiments and observations (Al-Ababneh, 2020:79). This paradigm mainly incorporates quantitative research methods such as questionnaires and surveys as these have a high chance of representing the characteristics of a population.

Table 4.1 Definitions of the Ontology, Epistemology and Methodology concepts

Item	Definition
Ontology	Ontology is defined as the study of existence. This concept also investigates which categories of entities exist – and how it is grouped and how (and if), they are related
Epistemology	Epistemology is the study of the origin, nature and limits of knowledge.
Methodology	Methodology is defined as a collection of methods, rules or set of procedures set by a discipline. It's also defined as procedures of inquiry in a certain area of study.

Adapted from: Crotty (1998:3), Kivuannja and Kuyini (2017:27), Al-Ababneh (2020:78-83)

The paradigm for this research study will be the interpretive research paradigm. The interpretive paradigm is concerned with the comprehension of a specific topic through the experiences and knowledge of others (Alharthi & Rehman, 2016:51-59).

Interpretivism is an approach which correlates strongly with qualitative studies, due to the complexities provided in the answers of the study.

Interpretivism further highlights that a reality is deciphered by the individual, only due to the philosophical position which is held by the individual (Nickerson, 2023) (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022:424) (Tuli, 2010:98).

Therefore, through the interpretivism approach – knowledge is encountered by the individual and not obtained by the individual externally.

Nickerson (2023) also further explains that the interpretivism approach is one which highlights the motivations, beliefs and reasoning of people is vital to understanding the gist of data which is collected around a topic.

In this study, the interpretivism approach can be characterized as a postmodern approach due to the value provided to the subjective opinions provided by the participants.

Throughout the findings, emphasis will be placed on the importance of various meanings – instead of a singular opinion of the researcher (Trivedi, 2020).

Therefore, considering the research problem of limited knowledge available on the topics of digital brand safety and viewability – as well as the research paradigm, the interpretivism approach is suited for the purpose of this study to further add to the existing knowledge on the topics of digital brand safety and viewability, based on the subjective opinions provided by participants.

4.4. Research method

Research methodology encapsulates the practical steps used by the researcher in order to conduct the study. This is a systematic approach whereby the researcher designs the study, in order to speak to the objectives and aim of the research. There are two main categories of research methodology, namely quantitative and qualitative methods (Patel & Patel, 2019:49). In this section, quantitative research and its application is briefly discussed, with the main focus being on qualitative research, its applications and its suitability for this study. Quantitative research refers to strategies which place emphasis on the collection and analysis of data using statistics. This form of research is widely used in the science field. Quantitative research can be implemented across descriptive, experimental, or correlational studies. In descriptive research, quantitative methodologies can be used to provide an overarching synopsis of the variables in question. Whereas in experimental research, one would use processes involving quantitative techniques to determine cause and effect relationships between variables using one variable as a constant which measures the changes in the other. Finally in correlational studies, quantitative methods can be incorporated to analyse the relationship between variables. Descriptive and correlational approaches can be utilized to confirm hypotheses using figures and numbers (Apuke, 2017:41; Mojahan, 2018:24).

The research method or approach used for this study was deductive reasoning. Hyde (2000:82-89) explains that this research method is generally described as a way of reasoning whereby the conclusion is only considered true through a supply of facts in order to solidify the conclusion. Therefore, through the information supplied by the chosen participants, facts will be deduced regarding the topic of digital brand safety and a conclusion reached through these facts.

Deductive reasoning was also used when determining the link between the *IAB SA White Papers* (IAB SA, 2018; 2019) and the views and practices of those in the industry. The research was qualitative as the main objective was to gain insight from participants and to understand the topic from their view (Palmer & Bolderston, 2006:16-19).

This method of reasoning incorporated using the *IAB SA White Papers* (IAB SA, 2018; 2019) as the existing theory, as due to the limited information found on the topics of brand safety and viewability

4.5. Research design

The research design is defined as the structure of processes and techniques which the researcher follows in order to answer the research questions of the study (Creswell, 2014:75; Mukherjee, 2017:56). There are various types of research designs namely, descriptive, correlational, experimental, diagnostic and exploratory research design (Asenahabi, 2019:78). The definitions of the abovementioned research designs will be dissected, but for the purpose of this study I will focus on exploratory research design and how it is suited to this study.

Descriptive research is described as theory-based research design, with the focus being on describing the topic of the study in question. In a descriptive research design, the data collection, analysis and presentation are included. Descriptive research designs are generally used for quantitative studies but can also be incorporated for qualitative studies. This research design is appropriate for determining trends, characteristics and frequencies regarding topics. Pallister (2023) points out that correlational research is used where a researcher seeks to determine the relationship between variables. At least two groups of data are required for this research design type and for the researcher to further establish the relation between related topics. However, it is key to note that the researcher does not control the variables in order to determine their relationship. The variables in question could either have a positive, negative or zero correlation. Variables have a positive correlation where they both change in the same direction; the opposite is true for a negative correlation whereby these variables change in different directions. A relationship between variables is noted as zero correlation where there is no relationship between the two variables in question (Bhandari, 2021).

Experimental designs are generally used to formulate a process to systematically test a hypothesis. Research is completed in an objective and controlled approach to reach a conclusion on the hypothesis. There are various types of experimental research designs namely, pre-experimental, true experimental and quasi-experimental designs. Pre-experimental research is used to determine whether a topic requires further investigation. True experimental research design makes use of statistical analysis in order to confirm the hypothesis of a study. Quasi-experimental designs are incorporated whereby participants of the group are not randomly assigned – this can be used in situations where arbitrary selection is not required or relevant in its setting (Bevans, 2019; Gopalan, et al., 2020:220)

For research which tries to uncover the fundamental cause of a certain issue or subject, a diagnostic research design will be used. Generally, diagnostic research design has three sections of the study: inception of the issue, diagnosis of the issue and the subsequent solution for the issue at hand.

As the research was qualitative, the research design used for this study was an exploratory research design. Stebbins (2011:1-14) points out that this specific research design can be used for an area or topic which needs further research. As there is limited research available

on the topic of brand safety and viewability, the exploratory research design was appropriate for this study.

4.6. Demarcation/delimitation of the study

The delimitation of a study determines what the boundaries are of the research study in question. The researcher confirms certain aspects to include or exclude in order to streamline the study, shaping the objectives and methodology of the study (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018:157).

For the purposes of this study, there was a knowledge and geographical delimitation as only professionals or practitioners in the marketing and digital media industries were targeted. These individuals should be knowledgeable regarding digital brand safety and viewability. These individuals were limited to South Africa, with the majority being from the city of Cape Town. Many participants were selected from Cape Town due to ease of access for interviews, as the researcher lives in the same city.

4.7. Research methodologies/processes.

In the following section, the topic of research methodologies and processes is discussed. The population, sample methodology, sample size, data collection instruments, data collection, data coding and analysis and ethical considerations for this study are explained. Subsequently, the questions included in the interview guide are also introduced which were the questions answered by the participants for this study.

4.7.1. Population

The research population is defined as a collection of individuals or objects which form the focus of the scientific inquiry. This population should contain a certain set of characteristics, which the researcher is interested in further investigating (Majid, 2018:3; Casteel & Bridier, 2021:343). Thacker (2020) points out that the research population provides further context and cues for individuals interested in the research. A well-defined population is crucial for the purposes of a study as without this the reader might form incorrect assumptions about the population linked to the research.

The population for the study consists of various role-players in the marketing and media industry in South Africa, including media agencies, brand representatives, media owners and other role-players.

4.7.2. Sample methodology

A non-probability sampling technique was used in this study. Non-probability sampling is described by Etikan et al. (2016:1-4) as a non-random method of selecting a sample, as the participants have been specifically chosen for the study. Qualitative studies generally make use of three sampling techniques, namely quota sampling, purposive sampling and snowball sampling (Omona, 2013:171). I define quota and snowball sampling below, and then further analyse purposive sampling and how it relates to the study.

Iliyasu and Etikan (2021:25) define quota sampling as a non-probability sampling technique whereby researchers select a sample based on the characteristics of a population. The information from these samples can then be assumed to apply to the entire population. There are two types of quota sampling namely, controlled and uncontrolled quota sampling. Snowball sampling is also a non-probability sampling technique, which is incorporated by researchers in order to obtain participants with rare characteristics. There are three types of snowball sampling, namely linear sampling, exponential non-descriptive snowball sampling, and exponential descriptive snowball sampling.

Linear snowball sampling starts with incorporating one respondent, who then enlists another potential respondent into the sample group. This process continues until the ideal sample size is obtained. Exponential non-descriptive sampling is a method which describes the process of the first respondent referring multiple possible participants. Using this method, each respondent would refer multiple potential participants as candidates to the researcher. This sequence would continue until the determined sample size is met. Exponential descriptive sampling is similar to the non-descriptive variant, whereby the researcher is presented with multiple potential candidates by a respondent, with the key difference being that only one person is selected from every referral.

Overall, snowball sampling is effective for researchers where finding participants for their study is a challenge. A benefit to using snowball sampling is that those who participate in the study are likely to know others who share these traits and can be potential participants as well.

Judgemental sampling is one of the non-probability sampling techniques. Purposive or judgemental sampling was used in this research study, as participants were expected to have adequate knowledge regarding the topic of digital brand safety and viewability. In terms of the knowledge required for the two topics, these were attributed to individuals who have been in the digital media industry or have been exposed to the digital media industry.

4.7.3. Sample size

Latham (2013:22) indicates that there should be a point of saturation reached, whereby there are no additional concepts to include in forthcoming interviews. According to Taherdoost (2016:18-27), this form of sampling is more efficient, as the researcher can identify the group of interest more directly. In terms of the sample size, there were 12 participants.

4.7.4. Data collection instruments

Qualitative studies focus on receiving insight to understand the reason behind why certain phenomena or topics exist. Therefore, by design, qualitative data collection instruments are generally exploratory and focuses on gaining insights. There are various qualitative data collection methods, and I will focus on the methods used in this study.

Qualitative surveys are used to either build an educated hypothesis on a topic, or this method could gather comprehensive information relating to a certain topic (Farrel, 2016). There are two types of qualitative surveys: paper surveys and online surveys. Wu et al. (2022) point out that paper surveys are widely used for qualitative studies and generally include short, open-ended questions.

For online surveys, participants type out answers via their electronic devices instead of writing them down as they would with paper surveys. This method provides multiple benefits, offering the respondent privacy to answer questions without the supervision of the researcher, and giving the researcher the ability to reach a larger potential audience to participate in the study (Howard, 2021).

Focus group discussions are another type of data collection instrument used in qualitative discussions. These are similar to interviews, with the main difference being that it is administered in a group setting. Similar to one-on-one interviews, the data collected through focus group discussions are insightful and full of detail. In the case of a focus group, the researcher would examine the opinions of the individuals with attention paid to the range in which these opinions would vary (Vaughan, 2017; Miller, 2020).

Thirdly, observations are another type of qualitative data collection technique. Ekka (2021:18) indicates that this technique can be used by researchers by observing individuals in natural situations or through constructed events. There are two types of observation techniques namely, overt and covert observations. In overt collection methods, the individuals who are being observed are made aware by the researcher, unlike covert collection techniques, where the individuals are unaware that they are being monitored (Bhasin, 2023). The observation method is valuable, as it allows researchers to view how participants encounter and react to a situation.

Finally, in-depth interviews are also one of the more widely used qualitative data collection techniques. This is defined as a structured conversation between two people which follows a purpose (Rutczyńska-Jamróz, 2022).

In this study, I made use of the in-depth interview data collection technique. A benefit of using this method is that I was able to extract individual experiences from each respondent. This was valuable as I wanted to determine the respondent's knowledge and view of digital brand safety and viewability. The in-depth interviews were conducted in person, or via email or telephone, as some of the participants were not based in Cape Town.

An interview guide was used with open-ended questions in order to collect information from the participant. Singer and Couper (2017:115-134) indicate that open-ended questions are important as these can draw extra information from the respondent not asked for by the interviewer, whereas closed-ended questions can be limiting and could display a bias from the researcher.

The information used in these in-depth interviews was adapted from the *IAB SA White Papers* (IAB SA, 2018; 2019), hence deductive reasoning was used in this study.

The white papers on brand safety and viewability were used as a basis for further investigation in this study as throughout the information search phase in this study, these were the only verified research sources found on these topics.

At the time in which this research began, around 2020, these white papers on brand safety and viewability – published in 2018 and 2019 respectively were extremely important to the industry.

In terms of a more current information search process, these white papers remain the two key industry source documents regarding brand safety and viewability.

The importance of the publication of the white paper on brand safety has been further highlighted by the then CEO of the IAB SA Paula Hulley and has said ““The fundamental objective of the white paper is to create awareness of the collective ecosystem and process to create brand safe environments. When brand safety is managed pro-actively and collectively, the power of digital to deliver business impact is exponential.”

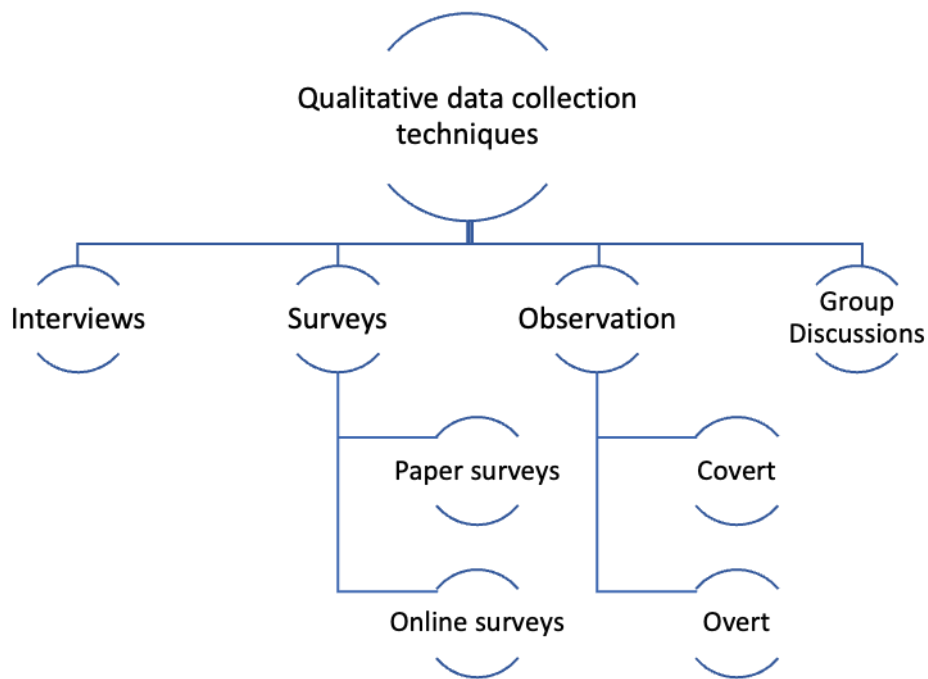


Figure 4.2: The different types of qualitative data collection techniques

Adapted from: Gill et al. (2008); Barret and Twycross (2018:63)

4.7.5. Data collection/fieldwork

Approval was granted by the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) Ethics Committee in order to conduct this study. After ethics clearance was obtained, the researcher approached the various participants in order to seek their participation in the study. Prospective participants were contacted via email to determine their suitability and willingness to participate in this study. The role of participants was to provide information from their own perspectives and experiences regarding digital brand safety and viewability.

The data was collected through in-depth interviews, either face-to-face interviews or telephonic or email interviews. Face-to-face interviews were used where the participant was willing to meet with the researcher and be interviewed in the same location. If this was not viable, but the participant was still willing to be interviewed in a different medium, email interviews or telephonic interviews were done (Coughlan, 2009:309-314).

There was no need for training or recruiting of additional assisting field workers because the researcher did not require further assistance in terms of contacting potential participants and conducting the interviews.

4.7.6. Data coding and analysis

Data coding is the process of labelling and arranging qualitative data in order to highlight themes and associations between variables. When it comes to qualitative data, data coding allows the researcher to examine and interpret this data in order to acknowledge the meaning of the data. Using data coding to uncover frequent themes and theories is part of thematic analysis. This is the type of data analysis that took place in this study.

Interviews were recorded digitally and the recording subsequently transcribed.

The transcriptions were analysed using ATLAS.ti. Web version. The exact version of the ATLAS.ti Web was v5.21.2-2024-01-10.

The data analysis technique used in this study was a thematic analysis of the in-depth interviews, as this was a qualitative research study. The researcher unpacks data using the thematic analysis method to uncover underlying ideas and attitudes which tend to surface in interviews (Nowell et al., 2017:1-13). Thematic analysis helped to answer the research questions determined at the beginning of the study. The overall themes and topics uncovered in the participants' interviews were ultimately useful in determining the answers to the research questions.

The transcribed data recorded during the interviews were then uploaded to ATLAS.ti.

This included various Codes – as per the data received and was categorised according to the topic of brand safety or viewability.

The topics of brand safety and viewability were then grouped into the categories of questions, and the answers of the participants were taken into consideration.

For example, regarding the concept of brand safety – whereby the participant was asked to provide their definition of the concept in question, these responses were subsequently grouped based on the responses by participants. Responses which were similar were then grouped.

The example is displayed as per the graph provided by ATLAS. Ti web.

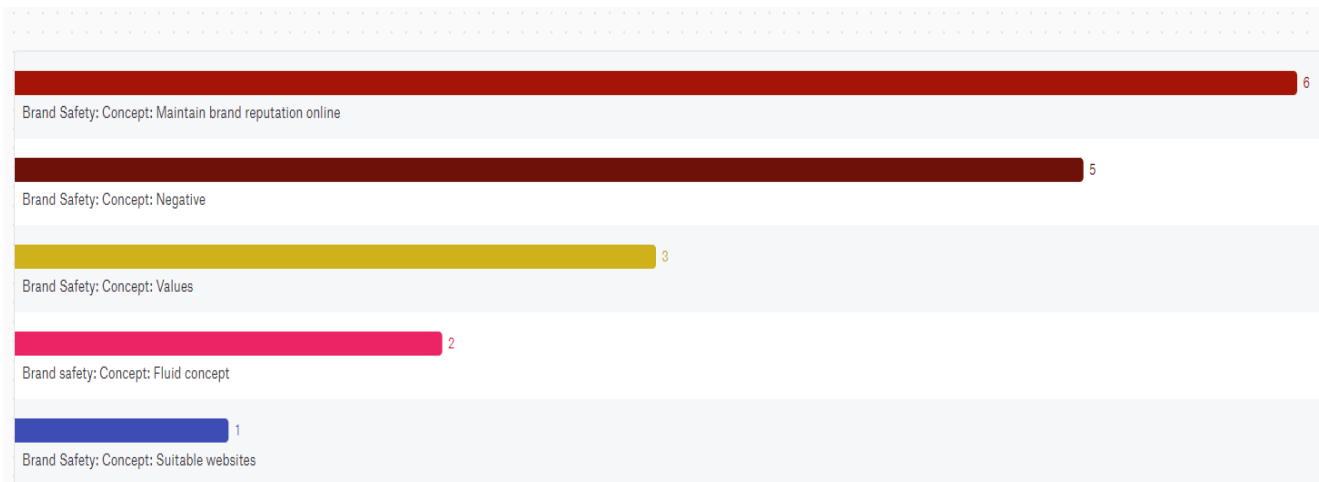


Figure 4.3: Example of coded analysis relating to participants responses

As highlighted in the figure above, majority of participants confirmed that brand safety entailed managing the reputation of the brand in the online space.

To further explain the example above, the second most popular response was that brand safety dealt with negative connotations related to the brand.

In addition to the example shown above, this also highlights the format for which the concepts, subsections and responses were grouped.

The following format was incorporated across all responses: “Topic: subsection: response”. This is illustrated in the example included with “Brand safety: concept: maintain brand reputation online”. This shows that the participant responded to a question specifically relating to the topic of brand safety and the concept of it, and the responses grouped focused mainly on maintaining the reputation of the brand in the online space.

4.8. Ethical considerations

Permission for the interviews was obtained from the organisations that the participants were involved with. In addition, each participant needed to provide consent to allow their information to be used for this study. Janodia et al. (2013:134-140) state that informed consent involves letting the participant know about the purpose and uses of the information given by the participant. In this case, each participant was made aware that their views and ideas regarding digital brand safety and viewability would be shared with the public, therefore, if a participant felt that any information was too private to share with the public then he or she was at liberty to not disclose this information.

According to Janodia et al. (2013:134-140), privacy and confidentiality can often be confused with one another, but these terms have a slight difference in meaning. Privacy concerns

withholding the identity of the individual providing the information, where confidentiality deals with the information provided being withheld from others or only being made accessible to certain parties. In this study, privacy was ensured, but the information provided by the participants would have to be shared as this would be part of the data collection and publishing process. If, however, a participant requested to remain anonymous, this request would be honoured.

Professionalism and honesty are two important qualities required when conducting a research study. Professionalism is defined as specific attributes and conduct which encapsulates the role of a certain profession (Idid & Arandas, 2016:287-311). Akaranga and Makau (2016:1-9) describe honesty as being sincere and truthful. These qualities are of the utmost importance when conducting the study, as the data collected from the participants should not be maliciously tampered with.

The South African Marketing Research Association code of conduct (SAMRA, n.d.) promotes the highest standards of research in South Africa, among their partners and in the larger research industry as a whole. As in accordance with the SAMRA code of conduct, this study was conducted with active consideration for these qualities for its findings to be acknowledged within the industry and to ensure the standards of SAMRA are upheld.

As noted above, ethics clearance was obtained from the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) research ethics committee to conduct this research study.

4.9. Trustworthiness

According to Bailey (2008:127) researchers which conduct their studies qualitatively should provide evidence of four criteria to highlight the trustworthiness of the results of the study.

The four criteria are listed below:

- Credibility
- Transferability
- Dependability
- Confirmability

The four criteria are further explained below, including how each one has been applied to this study.

Credibility

Credibility is defined as the measure to which the research conducted can be determined as accurate and reliable, as well as how precisely the participants views are depicted by the researcher (Tobin & Begley, 2004: 388).

There are a few methods by which researchers are able to prove the credibility of their qualitative findings. These methods include member checking, triangulation, peer debriefing, thick description, reflexivity, saturation and external audits (Nowell et al., 2017:3)

The key method used for this study was member checking. Member checking is done in a variety of ways, such as sharing transcripts of the interview, sharing summaries of the interview, etc. In the case of the study on brand safety and viewability, after the interview was conducted with a participant – the notes made based on the answers provided by the participant for each question was shared via mail.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the level of which qualitative research results can be transferred or to other settings. Korstjens and Moser (2018:121) explain that this concept deals with the application of qualitative research findings to similar contexts, but not to broader contexts specifically.

Transferability can be achieved by a thick description of qualitative results from various data collection methods.

Thick description is defined as a description of human action that also describes the contexts – not only the behaviours of individuals. Thick description has also been mentioned to improve the transferability of qualitative research findings and further assists researchers to assess the potential applicability to different contexts (Stahl & King, 2020:27).

Dependability

Dependability is related to reliability and is the extent to which a qualitative research study can be replicated by another researcher, and the same findings would be uncovered (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004:107; Rolfe, 2006:307).

A key method to establish dependability in a qualitative study, is to have an external audit conducted on the research study (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008:111).

In the case of this research study on brand safety and viewability, the qualitative research has been audited by two external auditors.

Confirmability

Confirmability for qualitative research is achieved when the data collected is checked throughout the data collection and analysis phases to ensure the findings would be highly likely to be repeated by others (Bengtsson 2016:13).

Confirmability also refers to the impartiality of the data and that the findings are not impaired by the bias of the researcher.

4.10. Research interview questions

The interview questions (see Table 6.1 below, also Appendix A) were divided into three categories: namely, qualifying questions, digital brand safety, and viewability. The qualifying questions section (section 1) would determine whether the potential participant would be suitable for this study. The questions aimed to confirm if the participant in fact did work in the media or marketing industry in South Africa as well as the sector which the participant was currently employed: client-side, media or creative agency.

4.11. Conclusion

This section focused on the methodology, approach and tools which were used for the implementation of this research study.

The academic research process was described, and the steps were followed in this study as well.

The research problem and objectives were also reintroduced as a reminder, to ensure the study and steps implemented throughout the study were focused on solving the problem and achieving the primary and secondary research objectives.

The interpretivism paradigm was discussed, and its application in this study was highlighted – especially with the study being a qualitative one.

The various qualitative data collection techniques were discussed, with the technique chosen for this study being in-depth interviews.

Finally, the criteria of trustworthiness is discussed, including credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability – and have been applied to this study

CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

5.1. Introduction

In chapters one and two of this study I explored the knowledge of brand safety and viewability within the marketing and media industry in South Africa. The research aimed to determine whether there was symmetry between the *IAB SA White Papers* (IAB SA, 2018; 2019) and the knowledge of experienced individuals within the marketing and media industry in South Africa. In this chapter, I present the research findings and the analysis of interviews of the participants who took part in the study. For the purposes of this study, I considered the *IAB SA White Papers* (IAB SA, 2018; 2019), which focused on digital brand safety and viewability respectively, and applied this to the knowledge of experienced media professionals within the industry. I conducted in-depth interviews, either in-person or through online meetings (via the Microsoft Teams application). The data collected in these interviews were used to determine the relationship between the contents of the *IAB SA White Papers* and the understanding of these concepts by those in the media and marketing industry.

The objective of the current research task was to coordinate the experience of the media professionals in South Africa and the *IAB SA White Papers*. The questions included in the interview guide were therefore determined by the theory in the *IAB SA White Papers*. Fundamentally, the theory in the *IAB SA White Papers* correlated to South African media practitioners' experience of brand safety and viewability.

In this chapter, the research findings through the coded text of participants responses are presented and analysed. At the end of this, it will be determined whether the theory mentioned in the *IAB SA White Papers* (IAB SA, 2018; 2019) matches the understanding of media practitioners in South Africa.

5.2. Interview guide

The interview guide consisted of 27 questions, with three different sections, firstly beginning with the qualifying questions, then moving onto the topics of brand safety and the final one on viewability (see Table 5.1 below).

Table 5.1. The questions in the Interview guide and the associated research objective

Question number	Question	Section	Research objective
1	Do you work in the media/marketing industry in South Africa?	Qualifying questions	N/A
2	Which marketing/media sector do you work in?		
3	Please can you define the concept of digital brand safety in your own words?	brand safety	To define brand safety and viewability.
4	How does the context of your digital advertisements play a role in your/your client's brands? ("your brand" refers to brand owner/ manager, etc.; "your client's brand" refers to those acting as custodians of the brand – digital agencies, etc.).		To examine industry professionals' understanding of digital brand safety and viewability.
5	How do you determine which sites/networks your/your client's online advertisements are displayed on?		To evaluate industry role-player's knowledge and implementation of the topics
6	Does your business purchase online inventory programmatically?		To evaluate industry role-player's knowledge and implementation of the topics
7	What are your views on programmatic advertising?		To evaluate industry role-player's knowledge and implementation of the topics
8	Which precautionary measures do you take to avoid your advertisements being placed in the incorrect context which may damage your/your client's brand?		To evaluate industry role-player's knowledge and implementation of the topics
9	Which costing model do your/your client's brand more widely used for their online advertising?		To evaluate industry role-player's knowledge and implementation of the topics
10	Why does your brand make use of this costing model?		To evaluate industry role-player's knowledge and implementation of the topics
11	Which measures are taken if your/your client's brand is not performing well on certain sites with regards to brand safety?		To evaluate industry role-player's knowledge and implementation of the topics

12	Which (categories), if any, would be considered safe for your/your client's brand. Please tick off in the boxes below.		To examine industry professionals' understanding of digital brand safety and viewability.
13	Which categories, if any, would you add to the above list?		To examine industry professionals' understanding of digital brand safety and viewability.
14	According to the <i>IAB SA White Paper on digital brand safety</i> (2018), it is up to the marketer to begin the process of brand safety? What are your thoughts about this statement?		To evaluate industry role-player's knowledge and implementation of the topics
15	Which methods do you use in order to safeguard brand safety when advertising via video?		To evaluate industry role-player's knowledge and implementation of the topics
16	How does brand safety technology affect the reach a campaign might have?		To evaluate industry role-player's knowledge and implementation of the topics
17	For the main goal of building awareness in the minds of consumers, is brand safety a concern?		To evaluate industry role-player's knowledge and implementation of the topics
18	Explain your answer in Question 17.		To evaluate industry role-player's knowledge and implementation of the topics
19	Please could you define the concept of viewability in your own words?	Viewability	To define brand safety and Viewability.
20	Does your brand/client have a brand safety and viewability benchmark score for online campaigns?		To evaluate industry role-player's knowledge and implementation of the topics
21	How does having a benchmark score for brand safety and viewability affect campaign performance?		To examine industry professionals' understanding of digital brand safety and viewability.
22	Which measures are taken if your/your client's brand is not performing well on certain sites with regards to viewability?		To evaluate industry role-player's knowledge and implementation of the topics
23	What is your experience regarding the link between programmatic advertising and viewability?		To evaluate industry role-player's knowledge and

			implementation of the topics
24	What relationship is there between the costing model used in a digital campaign (CPM, CPC, CPV, etc) and the viewability score achieved?		To evaluate industry role-player's knowledge and implementation of the topics
25	For the main goal of building awareness in the minds of consumers, is viewability a concern?		To evaluate industry role-player's knowledge and implementation of the topics
26	Please explain your answer in Question 25.		To evaluate industry role-player's knowledge and implementation of the topics
27	How does the ad format play a role in the potential viewability rating?		To evaluate industry role-player's knowledge and implementation of the topics

As mentioned in previous chapters, there was one interview guide (Appendix A) which was used for interviews across the various participants in the media landscape in South Africa. The same interview guide was used for individuals from client-side, creative agency, and media agencies.

The interview guide was used to investigate the brand safety and viewability measures and practises as noted by the IAB brand safety and Viewability White paper, against the practices experiences of those working in the media and marketing industry in South Africa.

Citations used from the coded text within the interviews are referenced as follows:

PD1M2 (3:3), which means the citation came from primary document 1, media practitioner 2 and can be found in paragraph 3 and line 3.

Throughout the interview process, there were minor amendments made specifically to the interview setup with participants. Interview 1 was 30 minutes; however during this interview there was not enough time as the interview went over the allocated time. Thereafter, from the next interview onwards, the scheduled time was an hour for all interviews.

5.3. Qualifying questions

This research was conducted with the aim of examining practices undertaken by individuals within the media and marketing industry in South Africa. Therefore, it was imperative that the participants interviewed were from this industry. Most of the participants from the media agency sector, while there were also individuals from the client-side and creative agency sector.

In the breakdown of our participants highlighted above, it was important that a) the participants were from the correct industries and did have knowledge on the topics of brand safety and viewability and b) had worked on implementing brand safety and viewability in campaigns.

5.4. Question 1: brand safety

5.4.1. Brand safety definition

Firstly, the definition of the concept of brand safety below is from the *IAB SA White Paper on brand safety* (IAB SA, 2018):

Brand safety refers to the strategy put into place to help ensure that online advertisements or associations do not appear on websites or in videos and articles that may conflict with a brand's image, mission or goals (including online environments where media wastage, often related to viewability and fraudulent activity, is rife). Keeping a brand aligned with the values and mission of a company is paramount in a digital world where one erroneously placed ad can ruin its reputation.

There are various similarities between the definition supplied by the *IAB SA White Paper on brand safety* and the definition provided by the media professionals interviewed in this study on the same topic. Maintaining brand reputation online, avoiding negative contexts and situations, and keeping to the brand's core values were the most prominent when determining the definition of brand safety. For maintaining brand reputation online, this was the most used theme, an example of which is shown below:

"To protect the client's/advertiser image or reputation by helping them avoid their brand messages appearing next to any content that could potentially harm the brand or reputation." PD6M4 (3:3-4).

Avoiding negative contexts and situations was also noted by participants. This comment is very similar to the one noted above, however, focuses slightly more on the negative content or placement of an advertisement.

"Ensuring the brand is not featured alongside controversial content." PD5CR1 (3:3)

This is also reflected in the *IAB SA White Paper* (IAB SA, 2018) with balancing staying true to the values of the brand, upholding the reputation of the brand, as well as avoiding negative connotations which may be linked to the brand.

Ensuring the brand content stays on suitable websites was also included as one of the notes when defining this concept.

A fluid concept of brand safety that was not in the original IAB definition is that with the ever-changing value system of consumers, what a brand stands for and aligns itself with would shift over time to ensure that these values are shared by consumers as well.

5.4.2. The role of context in brand safety

According to The *IAB SA White Paper on brand safety* (IAB SA, 2018:5), with regard to the importance of context for advertising campaigns:

“The process starts with marketers asking the right questions of their teams and agencies. This is rooted in a holistic understanding of the value chain and how ads are placed within the media domain to protect brand reputation. Before brands start to monitor their advertisements, it is important to define what they consider safe. Brands must identify topics they are comfortable [sic] associated with and those they prefer to avoid. While publishers and agencies may offer a robust system of brand-safety checks and balances, clients need to air their exact demands during the buying process. What’s taboo for one brand is fine for another, and even the best automated brand-safety rating systems may not always recognise the difference”.

In terms of the responses from the participants, the themes which were noted more regularly were suitability, audiences and audience negative behaviour. Below are examples of quotes from participants related to suitability and context:

“*Context*, environment. Most important part. Relevant environment for the brand. User is much more receptive. Fine line does differ by category entry point. Can’t have attention if not great creative, context is driver of the vessel.” PD12M9 (4:6-9).

“Context and brand suitability does play a role.” PD2M2 (4:7)

Suitability can be defined by the relevance of the environment to the brand’s values and image, and how well these two correlate with each other. One example of suitability provided by a respondent was of a financial institution, and the type of content a brand in this category should be typically associated such as business news, investment websites, etc.

Audiences were the second most popular theme uncovered in determining which context to place digital advertisements in. Below are a few examples of participants’ answers:

“Does make a huge difference according to the target audience. Engage with the correct market when they are susceptible to.” PD7M5 (4:6-7).

“For a while we moved away from context more focused to audiences.” PD1M1 (4:7).

For audience, this is defined by the type of individuals who seek out certain content and the size of this audience group. Following the same example of the financial institution above, it would be pertinent if a website/platform has many young professionals visiting regularly to consume financial-specific content such as saving tips, advice for home buyers, etc. The financial institution could see this as an opportunity to place advertisements on that platform, due to the audience it attracts.

In terms of audience negative behaviour, this theme was not shared amongst all participants; however it is key to note that while brands are keen to follow large portions of their target audiences, there may be certain websites/applications which are not aligned with the brand's values and image. Therefore, it would be important to avoid these environments.

“People do not follow brand safe behaviour.” PD1M1 (4:8).

Therefore, in terms of the description provided by the *IAB SA White Paper on brand safety* (IAB SA, 2018) we see a strong correlation between the values of the brand and environments in which its advertisements appear. This focuses more on the perspective of the brand and is to avoid reputational damage. However, the *IAB SA White Paper on brand safety* does not consider the focus on the audience, and the role audience behaviour plays in advertisements being served in potentially damaging environments.

There is no information included from the literature review, regarding the role of context in brand safety as there was little to no information found on this topic.

5.4.3. The selection of sites to display advertisements

As described in the sections above, audiences is the largest factor when determining the sites which marketers and media agencies target for their online advertisements.

The following themes were also included: approved, and disapproved site lists, focusing on objectives such as reach, relevance and impact, brand safety scores, recommendations from media agencies, brand positioning and consumer perception of site.

For the topic of Audiences, the following quotes were given by participants:

“Audiences are created. People who have engaged in content previously.” PD11M8 (5:12)

“Follow audience to where they are. Understand which sites are key in terms of the audiences.” PD9M7 (5:7-8).

For the theme of approved and disapproved site lists, the answers below were provided by participants:

“We need to avoid publishers that focus on sensitive categories such as parenting, pregnancy, health, fitness, education.” PD6M4 (5:11-12).

“Approved and disapproved lists. Received from global Programmatic team.” PD8M6 (5:10).

The comments above detail categories that are to be avoided due the nature of the product being advertised and processes that are undertaken by a local digital team as part of the global ways of working.

Sites being selected based off the campaign objectives were also noted, with the responses below being a few of examples of quotes provided by those in the study:

“Points to market objectives. Building mental availability. Which sites will we get the reach?” PD4CL1 (5:10-12).

“Have to balance reach vs relevance and impact. Programmatic does a great job in this.” PD9M7 (5:9-10).

Brand Safety scores, recommendations from media agencies, brand positioning and consumer perception of the site were also mentioned throughout this topic. However, audiences, disapproved and approved site lists and campaign objectives were the more notable themes shared by a larger portion of participants.

Therefore, when selecting the best sites for their ad placements, there are several factors that brand custodians and their media agencies must consider such as a mix of audience sizes, campaign objectives, brand safety and the perception of the site. The theme of audience is carried through for this question, as well as from the previous one which focused on the context of the advertisement.

In terms of the *IAB SA White Paper on brand safety* (IAB SA, 2018), from a brand safety point of view it encourages brands and their media agencies to purchase inventory directly with media owners. This enables media agencies to include performance clauses within agreements, ensuring the brand is insured against negative brand safety outcomes.

The findings confirm the literature review details on the reasoning behind why brands select to display their advertisements on certain sites (Anumolu et al., 2015:256; Išoraitė, 2016:321)

5.4.4. Does your business purchase inventory programmatically?

When confirming whether the participants used programmatic to purchase online inventory for digital campaigns, all participants said that they did use this media buying method participants. The benefit of this buying method is that this allows brands to purchase media across various channels through one centre of control.

As confirmed in the literature review, this is in line with the trend seen worldwide regarding programmatic media buying. According to Davis (2021), programmatic advertising spending will account for 91% of all digital advertising spend in the United States in 2022.

5.4.5. Views on programmatic advertising

The views on programmatic advertising seem to be mostly focused on positive aspects of this buying method: advantages such as effectiveness, innovation, improved reach, efficiencies, closer campaign control, and increased touchpoints. Speaking to the effectiveness of this form of media buying, participants expressed the following:

“About getting the audience where they are most likely to look at the brand in a good light. Let’s you be fluid and dynamic, not stuck to one partner.” PD7M5 (7:16-17).

“Views have shifted recently. Effective way of buying digital. Cost-effective and premium environments.” PD4CL1 (7:18-19).

Innovation was also one of the main themes included in how participants view programmatic advertising:

“Staying ahead of the curve, all buying moving towards programmatic advertising.” PD8M6 (7:19).

However, there were several negative comments linked to this method of buying, namely that it was cheaper, and involved potentially unwanted inventory, and incorrect contextual targeting. The main focal point of programmatic media buying previously was deemed to be its efficiency rather than its impact.

“Annoying – sometimes it does not end up in the correct context.” PD3M3 (7:14).

“Negative, was approached incorrectly. Wasn’t help us to same standards. Efficiency was the main factor. Good to bring in more human element to programmatic.” PD1M1 (7:16-17).

These comments align with the *IAB SA White Paper* theme on programmatic media buying adding that although this method provides cost efficiencies, it does require management and restrictive measures used by advertisers. This aligns with the theory found in the literature review, where the efficacy of this buying method was confirmed but also that precautionary measures are required.

5.4.6. Precautionary measures taken to avoid being placed in the incorrect context

Based on the precautionary measures taken to avoid the advertisements of brands being placed in the wrong environment, the majority of participants confirmed that site lists, human control and trusting in their media agency are the key measures to avoid advertisements being placed in the wrong environments. The participants provided the comments below regarding the theme of site lists which was the most popular theme:

“Exclusion lists programmatically and with Google search. For keywords and sites.” PD7M5 (8:18-19).

“Blacklists and whitelists applied to all campaigns. Including keywords.” PD4CL1 (8:22)

For human control, this suggests the need for implementation teams to manage campaigns closely:

“Human part is essential to understanding sites and contexts.” PD2M2 (8:24).

A perspective which was popular with participants who were client-side was the reliance and confidence in their media agency to ensure that the brand is protected from their communications being displayed in unwanted environments:

“Complete trust in the digital agency to follow best practise.” PD10CL2 (8:15)

“Collaborating with media agency where the inventory would sit.” PD4CL1 (8:23)

A view was presented which was not shared by the majority of participants, and which is not found in the *IAB SA White Paper*, is booking directly on renowned sites:

“Book directly on certain sites, actually displaying on site. Important for association.” PD11M8 (8:23).

The above, including site lists and human control, have been confirmed and were included in the literature review. However, the literature review does not note the way in which direct bookings could negate the effect of being placed in the incorrect context.

5.4.7. Which costing model do your/your client's brand more widely used for their online advertising?

Costing models are used for digital campaigns and have the potential to be adjusted based on the strategy of the digital campaign.

Many participants said they used CPM as their preferred costing model, which was based on the objective of the campaign.

"CPM." PD3M3 (9:20).

"CPM." PD6M4 (9:22).

CPV was also one of the costing models mentioned, and this focused on campaigns which used the video format.

"CPV." PD3M3 (9:20).

5.4.8. Why does the brand make use of this costing model?

CPM was selected by the majority of participants as the costing model used most in their digital campaigns, along with CPV. There was one participant who confirmed that all of the above were used as part of their digital campaigns. Campaign objectives, the format used for online campaigns and brand life stage were the majority of reasons provided for using particular costing models for digital campaigns.

"Brand uses CPM as the KPI is reach. This would ensure the reach is as high as possible. CPC would diminish reach, as objective is clicks." PD11M8 (10:28-29).

"To meet client objectives." PD12M9 (10:26).

In terms of the creative format used in digital campaigns, these can be videos, display banners, etc.:

"Depends on the format which we run for these brands." PD3M3 (10:22).

"Run on banners and video, CPM. CPCV, story of the creative to come through." PD11M8 (10:29-30).

Brand life stage was also a prominent theme, which was also closely linked to the campaign objective:

"Defined by life stage of the brand; entrant vs mature brand; know the brand but has to stand out." PD2M2 (10:29-30).

“Because global brand equals directive provided by global in terms of costing models.” PD3M3 (10:24).

The above themes of campaign objectives, creative formats and brand life stages were prominent in the participant’s responses, although these were not a focus in the *IAB SA White Paper on brand safety* (IAB SA, 2018). These themes of campaign objectives and creative formats were found in the literature review as well, although an addition was the impact of the brand’s life stage on the media buying type for digital campaigns.

5.4.9. Which measures are taken if your/your client’s brand is not performing well on certain sites with regards to brand safety?

This question deals with the actions undertaken when experiencing performance which is not optimal in terms of brand safety. Most participants responded by saying they relied on their digital team to investigate and rectify. Another popular theme was that the campaign was to be removed from the low-performing sites, as well as regular site lists downloaded on the third party platform by digital campaign managers.

The digital implementation team would play a crucial role for many participants, with participants noting the following:

“Optimisations would need to be made; brand safety measures included upfront. Regularly monitored by ad platforms.” PD5CR1 (11:32-33).

“Weekly optimisation sessions to review campaign performance. Analyse what’s impacting it, deep dive into previous setups, optimise on how to improve brand safety performance.” PD3M3 (11:25-27).

Another response given by several participants was that low performing site/s would be removed from digital campaigns:

“If become aware in violation of brand safety, taken down immediately.” PD4CL1 (11:28).

“Remove the sites and add to exclusion lists.” PD7M5 (11:24).

The pulling of site lists on a regular basis was also a key note provided by participants. This speaks to ongoing maintenance, ensuring the digital campaign performance is in line with objectives:

“Pull site lists on weekly/bi-weekly basis.” PD8M6 (11:29)

“Understand reasoning, draw up a site list.” PD4CL1 (11:29)

The above-mentioned topics are not listed in the literature review, due to the minimal amount of literature found on the topic of brand safety.

5.4.10. Which of the 13 categories would be considered safe for your/your client's brand?

I investigated the 13 categories listed by the *IAB SA White Paper on brand safety* (IAB SA, 2018) as those which are unsafe for brands. The majority of participants confirmed that none of the categories listed were safe for their brand's content to appear alongside.

"None." PD1M1 (12:27).

"None considered safe." PD10CL2 (12:23).

However, there was one category which was considered safe by a participant, and this was mainly due to the nature of the product which the client was in:

"Tobacco considered safe, depending on content." PD9M7 (12:23).

The *IAB SA White Papers* provides a list of 13 unsafe categories, as noted above, but also adds that one or more of these categories might be acceptable for some brands:

"In addition to these categories, it is critical to define what "safe" means to you and your brand. For example, some brands are comfortable being placed next to a road accident story (e.g., a road accident attorney) but others less so (e.g., a baby car-seat manufacturer or an alcohol brand)" (IAB SA, 2018:4).

Therefore, while the majority of participants confirmed the 13 categories noted were unsafe for their brands, one participant responded that one of the categories was acceptable, and both of these confirm the *IAB SA White Paper* theory.

5.4.11. Which categories, if any, would you add to the above list?

In terms of categories that participants thought should be added to the 13 categories to be deemed unsafe for brands, participants provided various responses. \Politics and religion were the most frequent categories, followed by parents' and children's sites and health-related sites.

For politics and religion, below are a few comments provided by participants:

"Political content." PD8M6 (13:34)

"Politics, especially in SA. Religion." PD2M2 (13:33).

“Religion (middle east) and LGBT (middle east).” PD6M4 (13:32)

Comments given by participants relating to parents’ and children’s sites can be found below:

“Kids, Pregnancy, alcohol brands. Don’t want to be associated with these.” PD11M8 (13:40).

Health-related sites were also a prominent theme provided by some of the participants relating to categories which should be avoided:

“Health sites, pregnancy sites (ultra-restrictive brands).” PD9M7 (13:40).

“Health pages, Covid19, monkeypox, no disease content is allowed for these brands.” PD2M2 (13:33-34).

News was also a theme which was raised multiple times by participants:

“News, in general.” PD1M1 (13:30).

“Would keep the above news.” PD3M3 (13:29).

Themes that were also mentioned by participants included countries at war and terrorism, cults and survivalism, incentivised traffic, biased content – race and gender – and underage content. Based on the above, it is important to note the local situation in a country and recognise topics that might be divisive to a large audience. This is shown in topics like religion and politics being the most popular themes to be avoided by brands.

These themes are not noted in the literature review amongst the content, which is deemed unsafe by brands, therefore they would be an addition to literature.

5.4.12. According to the *IAB SA White Paper on digital brand safety (IAB SA, 2018)*, it is up to the client to begin the process of brand safety. What are your thoughts about this statement?

The *IAB SA 2018 White Paper on digital brand safety* notes that it is the marketer's responsibility to begin the brand safety process. The majority of participants in this study agreed with this statement that the client should indeed drive the implementation of brand safety and guide this process.

“Agree with this statement. We cannot do things without client’s approval/knowledge.” PD11M8 (14:42-43).

“Collaborative process with agency, but marketer should start the conversation. Education needs to be done for all parties associated with the brand.” PD4CL1 (14:32-33)

“Collaborate on brand safety elements, client to designate areas but media agency to advise proactively.” PD8M6 (14:39-40).

“However, the media agency should keep this in mind for activations moving forward.” PD9M7 (14:28).

Another key theme that was discussed for this question was the responsibility of media owners in terms of activating the campaigns:

“Threefold, client, media agency, media owner.” PD12M9 (14:41).

“Media partners, more responsibility.” PD1M1 (14:33).

However, one isolated comment was that it is the responsibility of the media agency to guide this conversation, not clients:

“Many marketers are unaware of the BS issue, up to media agency to initiate this conversation.” PD3M3 (14:32-33).

The themes mentioned above by participants, namely that marketers should begin the process of brand safety; it was the responsibility of media agencies to heed and implement brand safety measures on a campaign basis; the role of media owners and increasing transparency, as well as marketers being unaware of the issue of brand safety; and the responsibility of media agencies to educate clients and initiate this process, are all comments which agree with statements made in the *IAB SA White Paper on brand safety*.

5.4.13. What are some of the universal concerns around video advertising that a marketer should be aware of?

Context was one of the key concerns which participants confirmed when it came to video advertising. User-generated content and attention quality were mentioned as well. Regarding context, are a few examples of quotes from participants are shown below:

“Around where it shows up, context is important.” PD9M7 (15:30).

“Video content does well in certain places, but not in others. Depends on where the video is placed.” PD4CL1 (15:36-37)

User-generated content was also a key concern for video advertising:

“UGC from a social perspective, how do you control how you show up. Choose environment wisely.” PD1M1 (15:35-36).

“Incorrect tagging of UGC.” PD3M3 (15:37).

Attention quality is also one of the comments made by participants:

“Attention quality on video. Similar to how TV works, nobody knows if anyone is watching. Could be placement (side of the screen, etc.), creative of quality, attention deficit of audiences.” PD11M8 (15:44-47).

5.4.14. Which methods do you use to safeguard for brand safety when advertising via video?

Blocklists and context were the prevailing themes from the participants in terms of methods which were used to safeguard their video campaigns from being displayed in incorrect environments. On the topic of blocklists, the quotes below were provided by participants:

“Block lists, whitelists, manual maintenance checks weekly.” PD2M2 (16:47).

“Exclusion lists, multiple vetting of sites, vetting of the creatives as well.” PD7M5 (16:33).

In terms of context, there are examples of participants including this in their feedback:

“Same, thinking of brand safety, context.” PD1M1 (16:37).

The *IAB SA White Paper on brand safety* does not specifically provide guidance on measures to safeguard brand safety when advertising via video. Therefore, in this study, a measure to enhance brand safety for video campaigns can be provided.

Additional comments included human control, keyword targeting, that the precautions used were similar to those for non-video placements, implementing 3rd party verification, avoiding user-generated content, compliance, trusting media agency to follow best practices, ensuring all parties have vetted the creative content as well as the media placement and ensuring the local guidelines are followed.

5.4.15. How does brand safety technology affect the reach a campaign might have?

A sizeable portion of participants confirmed that brand safety technology affects the amount of reach an advertising campaign might have.

“It does, if the audience was a certain number, it would reduce this. Protect the brand.” PD9M7 (17:34).

“Whenever you have restrictions, you reduce the potential. Potential reach restricted.” PD10CL2 (17:33-34).

A theme which also arose regularly was that although such technology does affect the reach a campaign would achieve, this is not necessarily a bad thing, as the reputation of the brand would be of utmost importance.

“It does affect the reach. But at the same time, you know you’re reaching the right people. Rather reach right people in a safe space, than larger amounts who are not TA [target audience].” PD4CL1 (17:40-42)

“Would impact performance. Not necessarily a bad thing.” PD1M1 (17:40).

Another theme that was suggested included the understanding of reach, particularly in the online environment:

“Understanding of “reach” would change.” PD1M1 (17:42).

Additional comments which participants made included that being on the correct sites built brand sentiment, the reach achieved depends on the level of safeguards applied, inventory is vetted prior to reach calculations, holding media owners more accountable, measures taken are imperative to being in the correct context, blocking websites, and how it should not affect reach if pulled against a whitelist.

5.4.16. For the main goal of building awareness in the minds of consumers, is brand safety a concern?

The majority of participants confirmed that when it came to awareness and building mental availability in the minds of consumers, brand safety was a concern. This was confirmed in the literature review, whereby it was noted that awareness is the first step in the digital marketing funnel and highlights its importance. According to Keller’s brand equity model, salience is the first step in brand building, with this being similar to awareness in a digital context as consumers have to recognize the brand first before they will consider purchasing online (Cernikovaite, 2011; Keller, 2009; Kumar, 2018:2).

5.4.17. Why is brand safety a concern when building awareness in the minds of consumers?

For most participants, brand safety was a concern when it came to building brand awareness in the minds of consumers. For most of participants, the reason behind this being a concern was that it affects how the brand is perceived:

“Awareness is related to perception; therefore it is a concern on where the brand shows up.” PD1M1 (19:45).

“Building awareness for the brand, trying to build that association in the mind of the consumer.” PD7M5 (19:38-39).

This reason was the most frequently occurring amongst participants, however one opinion which differed compared to the other participants was that brand safety is not really a concern when building awareness:

“Yes and no.” PD2M2 (19:53).

Additional comments included that it was necessary to move users down the funnel, because the campaign objective is awareness, does not mean association and quality should suffer, while smaller brands may not be concerned about brand safety when building awareness, that if the audience interacts with unsafe content, they might be the incorrect audience, the consumer might be desensitised to the environment, the campaign can be optimised for awareness after the brand safety measures have been implemented.

When investigating the *IAB SA White Paper on brand safety* (IAB SA, 2018), it does not communicate the impact of digital brand safety against building brand awareness for various brands. Therefore, this would be an addition to the knowledge on the topic of brand safety.

5.5. Viewability

5.5.1. Please could you define the concept of viewability in your own words?

When it comes to the participants’ definition of the concept of viewability there was a large portion that defined this concept as the awareness of an advertisement.

“Has the target audience actually seen my ads throughout various devices?” PD8M6 (20:58)

“How impactful an ad is in a certain space. Sites are so cluttered; users might be able to see the ad but not take note of it.” PD9M7 (20:39-40).

Another concept which was repeated on numerous occasions was that a certain percentage of the advertisement were visible for an amount of time.

“Percentage of the entire ad which is visible to consumer for a certain amount of time.” PD3M3 (20:44).

“Digital, amount who have seen your content, seen impressions. Could be a fraction of percentage.” PD7M5 (20:40).

A few participants also confirmed that being above the fold added to viewability:

“Making sure we are 100% above the fold, whichever screen we are on.” PD2M2 (20:59).

“V means when the ad is within the radius which someone would be able to see the ad. Above the fold. Very important = worth paying more for. Viewable = Awareness.” PD5CR1 (20:53-56).

Additional participants also provided the following comments regarding the concept of viewability: 50% of advertisement pixels are in-view, that a brand wants 100% viewability, that it is a digital KPI that might not necessarily translate to a marketing benchmark, that it is more focused towards an upper funnel metric and that it is a platform metric, not one which focusses on human behaviour. Compared to the theory offered by the *IAB SA White Papers* (IAB SA, 2018; 2019), the themes mentioned above confirm these theories.

5.5.2. Does your brand/client have a brand safety and viewability benchmark score for online campaigns?

Majority of participants have confirmed that for online campaigns, a benchmark score for brand safety and viewability is followed.

“Yes.” PD3M3 (21:46).

“Yes.” PD6M4 (21:55).

However, there was a few participants who commented that in terms of digital campaigns, a set benchmark score for these metrics is not adhered to:

“No.” PD2M2 (21:62).

5.5.3. How does having a benchmark score for brand safety and viewability affect campaign performance?

The majority of participants noted that having a benchmark score for brand safety and viewability meant a better quality of advertising for their brand:

“Affects it in a good way, better quality impressions. More positive associations with the brand. Better actions taken by audience as a result.” PD7M5 (22:43-44).

“Better quality, the better score means ads are placed in areas which gives audiences the chance to engage with the brand ads.” PD8M6 (22:62-63).

Another repeated theme used was that the inclusion of brand safety and viewability benchmarks affects performance for lower funnel metrics:

“Because of better V, better lower funnel performance (clicks, etc.)” PD3M3 (22:49).

“Yes, a V score is kept. This does affect performance, if not seen enough, affects clicks and completed views achieved.” PD5CR1 (22:61-62).

Conversely however, some participants found that having a benchmark score for campaigns did not affect performance at all:

“Can’t affect performance but will only let you know what it was.” PD1M1 (22:54).

“It does not affect performance.” PD12M9 (22:67).

Additional comments made by participants about having a benchmark rating for online advertising campaigns included the following: that it affects reach, having one is also based off the relationship built with client, it increases efficiency, viewability has a correlation with attention metrics, and that it enables there to be a definition for what a successful campaign looks like.

5.5.4. Which measures are taken if your/your client’s brand is not performing well on certain sites with regards to viewability?

The majority of those in the study confirmed that if a brand is not performing well on sites with regards to viewability scores, they would remove the site from their campaign.

“Block out websites with low viewability scores.” PD8M6 (23:66).

“Apps with low performance will be removed from the campaign.” PD12M9 (23:71).

Another theme which was apparent for numerous participants was that it would be imperative to confirm the site metrics and whether or not it would be the wrong site to be on moving forward:

“If not performing well, and not necessary to client, then pull from site list.” PD7M5 (23:47).

“Confirm site metrics, cheap inventory? Or wrong site.” PD1M1 (23:56).

Further to the above themes, another one which was suggested was using a third-party verification partner for digital campaigns:

“Adding a viewability partner to optimize more accurately.” PD12M9 (23:83).

“Partnering with a 3rd party vendor (MOAT) assists us in driving high viewability. Our costing model allows that the brand only ever pays for full views, 100% or closest to viewability.” PD12M9 (23:84-85).

Another comment made by participants, was that when a site is experiencing low performance, the digital implementation team assists with investigating the issue:

“Digital team to investigate campaign setup and diagnose issue.” PD3M3 (23:51).

“Stop campaign, probe into low scores, site lists put together.” PD4CL1 (23:52).

Over and above the resolutions provided above, participants have also said that when experiencing low performance on sites when it comes to viewability, the following were also mentioned: the buying method should be considered and media owner held accountable for bad performance; contacting the media partner to rectify the context for the situation; if the performance for other metrics is strong, then the campaign should not be paused; investigate the audiences; viewability metrics are not viewed in isolation when determining campaign performance; it is advised to partner with media owners who offer viewable inventory; if it is a website which the client wants, perhaps revisit the creative content used in the campaign; remove non-performing creative assets.

5.5.5. Media practitioner’s experience on if there is a link between programmatic advertising and viewability.

Numerous participants confirmed that there was a link between programmatic advertising and viewability, with a large proportion of these participants noting that this form of advertising focuses on efficiency and not impact:

“Efficiency came poor viewability, as we were focused on cheaper placement (which meant that we would achieve lower CPM rates – but lower viewability.” PD1M1 (24:57).

“See lower V scores when purchasing programmatically.” PD2M2 (24:71).

In addition to the focus on efficiency and impactful advertising placements without impact, the participants also provided these comments when mentioning the link between programmatic advertising and viewability: performance is similar to direct buys; there is potential for stronger contextual targeting; 100% viewability cannot be guaranteed by media owners; third party verification provides agencies the ability to optimise for viewability with programmatic campaigns; it is easier to optimise as well using programmatic campaigns; programmatic advertising generally follows the audience but does the audience necessarily see the

advertisement? Impactful partners should provide better viewability; that advertising campaigns programmatically increase the overall touchpoints of a campaign; campaign parameters can be set up before a campaign goes live; premium publishers have less risk; and using this form of buying method allows for easier optimisation and control.

The *IAB SA White Paper on viewability* (IAB SA, 2019) describes programmatic advertising, although there is no mention made of the link between this form of buying and viewability.

5.5.6. What relationship is there between the costing model used in a digital campaign (CPM, CPC, CPV, etc.) and the viewability score achieved?

A popular theme was that for CPC and CPV campaigns, the viewability score is important:

“CPC = what constitutes a click? Relationship with V is important. CPV = viewability score is most important.” PD2M2 (25:76-77).

“CPV and CPC could be a better indicator of viewability than CPM as it is more action-orientated.” PD7M5 (25:50-51).

Another theme raised by a number of individuals was that using the CPV model might be able to counteract viewability concerns:

“CPV model, counter-act viewability concerns.” PD1M1 (25:62).

“E.g. for CPV = Prog video, if V is low means audience is not able to see video and lower on the page. If V is higher, means ad is higher up on the page.” PD8M6 (25:

Another common theme was that there is a relationship between the costing model and the viewability score achieved, although the objective is key:

“There will always be a relationship, but at the end of the day, the objective is what’s most important.” PD10CL2 (25:70-71).

“Yes, 100%. Costing model depends on goal. CPC, more traffic-based. On the action-based costing models, viewability could be higher.” PD4CL1 (25:56-58).

Additional comments mentioned were that in terms of the costing model used and its relationship with the viewability score: audiences are a key factor; there is no relationship between these two factors; if a certain costing model is used, it would be key to entrust a verification partner; the introduction of CPM ensures media buyers are only billed for impressions which are viewed; that CPC is very similar to CPM in terms of viewability score achieved; that CPC buys generally have lower viewability; that if viewability score is higher, then in turn the CPM achieved would be lower; and that only sometimes the buying method affects the viewability score.

5.5.7.1. For the main goal of building awareness in the minds of consumers, is viewability a concern?

The majority of participants confirmed that for campaigns in which the main objective is awareness, viewability is a key concern for them.

“Yes.” PD3M3 (26:56).

“Yes.” PD6M4 (26:68).

5.5.7.2. Why is viewability a concern for the main goal of building awareness in the minds of consumers?

For a large portion of participants, not being viewable means that audiences cannot see their advertisements, and therefore brand awareness is not being built as the advertising message has not landed:

“Awareness phase is most important, if people don’t know who you are, how can they build opinion of you?” PD2M2 (27:79-80).

“Common sense, if people cannot see my ad, then awareness is not achieved. People would not know about my product or service.” PD8M6 (27:73-74).

This is the theme shared by majority of participants, although there were additional comments made by these individuals: viewability is a platform metric, whereas awareness is mainly a human metric; that in online campaigns, it is key to balance viewability and awareness; that viewability is a concern when building awareness, but it should be an internal issue, not one brought up with client; and that viewability should be recognised as a key upper funnel metric.

5.5.8. Ad format’s role in viewability rating

In terms of the advertisement’s format and whether this plays a role in the viewability rating for digital campaigns, the majority of participants have confirmed that different formats do contain different metrics:

“Different benchmarks for videos and display. Less on the consumer but more on the publisher to increase viewability. Your eyes maybe don’t see ad, but it is viewable on the side. Viewability should be higher for videos than display. CPM key for awareness, other metrics require action.” PD11M8 (28:84-88).

“From a data perspective, ad formats have [different] viewability metrics. Ad format and site plays a role in viewability rating.” PD1M1 (28:69-70).

Regarding the format of creatives used for digital campaigns, there were participants who confirmed that proceeding with larger format creative content could see improved viewability results:

“Larger format would be more preferable in terms of viewability.” PD3M3 (28:61).

“The bigger the better. Larger formats (full screen, etc.) have a bigger chance of getting a higher V rating than the smaller formats.” PD9M7 (28:53-55).

However, there were individuals who do not agree that the ad format does play a role in the overall viewability rating:

“Ad format doesn’t really play a role in viewability.” PD11M8 (28:82).

“I don’t think the ad format makes a difference.” PD12M9 (28:87).

Besides the importance of ad formats in a campaign’s viewability rating, participants have also noted that the main focus should be the context of the advertisement; that the format should be suited to audience consumption; one respondent, however, suggested that larger formats have lower viewability ratings; another key is to keep the brand message succinct; that there should be an industry standard that brands should aim to not go lower than; media owners should also focus on their viewability offering as part of their value exchange; and mobile banners around content should be visible for longer.

5.6 Conclusion

The main aim of the study was to contribute to the existing body of knowledge regarding digital brand safety and viewability in South Africa, as well as the development of a digital brand safety and viewability process.

Through the findings relating to this study, there has been additional information which has been uncovered to the existing body of knowledge on the topics of brand safety and viewability – with some of these findings confirming the information in the IAB SA White Papers on brand safety and viewability, and other findings including additional information over and above the White Papers on brand safety and viewability.

The research aim for this study is linked to the research problem, as through the development of a digital brand safety and viewability process – this would contribute to the existing body of knowledge regarding these topics.

The primary research objective of the current study was to develop a digital brand safety and viewability process, from a South African perspective.

Based off the findings from the research and overall, the insights provided by the participants, we have able to produce a process for the topics of digital brand safety and viewability

The brand safety process comprises of six steps, with the viewability process comprising of five steps.

Regarding the secondary research objectives for this study, firstly to assess industry professionals understanding of the topics of brand safety. This was achieved as the findings in this study does consider how these topics are understood and how participants would explain the concepts of brand safety.

Secondly, regarding the secondary research objective to assess industry professionals understanding of the topics of viewability. Throughout the findings, there have been insights gathered from the participants based on their knowledge of the topic of viewability.

For the objective of defining brand safety and viewability, this study has found that the definitions are in line with those provided by participants; however there have been additions to the definitions provided by the *IAB SA White Papers*. An addition to the definition of brand safety was that this concept is fluid, and what would be deemed as “brand safe” would be determined by what is socially acceptable for consumers and the brand’s values. Finally, the primary objective for this study was to develop a digital brand safety and viewability guide for the media industry in South Africa. This will be further approached in Chapter 7.

The data found in this study further adds to the literature review, especially regarding the concepts of brand safety and viewability as pertaining to Keller’s model (1993).

Participants have confirmed that both brand safety and viewability have a relationship with building brand awareness in the minds of the consumer.

Therefore, it is confirmed that the topics of brand safety and viewability are key for brands striving to achieve brand salience, the first step of the Keller model.

CHAPTER SIX: STRATEGIC MANAGERIAL AND ACADEMIC RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

As mentioned in in chapters 1 and 4 previously, the current study focused on three research objectives. The primary objective was to develop a digital brand safety and viewability guide for the media industry in South Africa. The secondary objectives was to examine industry professionals' understanding of digital brand safety and viewability; to evaluate industry role-player's knowledge and implementation of the topics (brand safety, viewability, ad fraud, contextual categories to avoid) discussed in the *IAB SA White Paper on brand safety* (IAB SA, 2018) as well as to evaluate the related concerns of industry professionals and finally to define brand safety and viewability.

In this chapter, I determine whether these objectives have been met, as well as if there are further additions to be made outside of the *IAB SA White Paper on brand safety* based on the experience and practices in the media/marketing industry pertaining to brand safety and viewability.

6.2 Findings and recommendations

The research findings on the congruence between the *IAB SA White Papers* (IAB SA, 2018; 2019) and the experience of media and marketing practitioners in South Africa are presented below, focusing on brand safety first and then the topic of viewability. I then present recommendations based on the research findings, with media practitioners' knowledge and experience of these topics introduced and considered against the *IAB SA White Papers* (IAB SA, 2018; 2019).

A process of brand safety is introduced as Figure 7.1, with the process of viewability introduced as Figure 7.2.

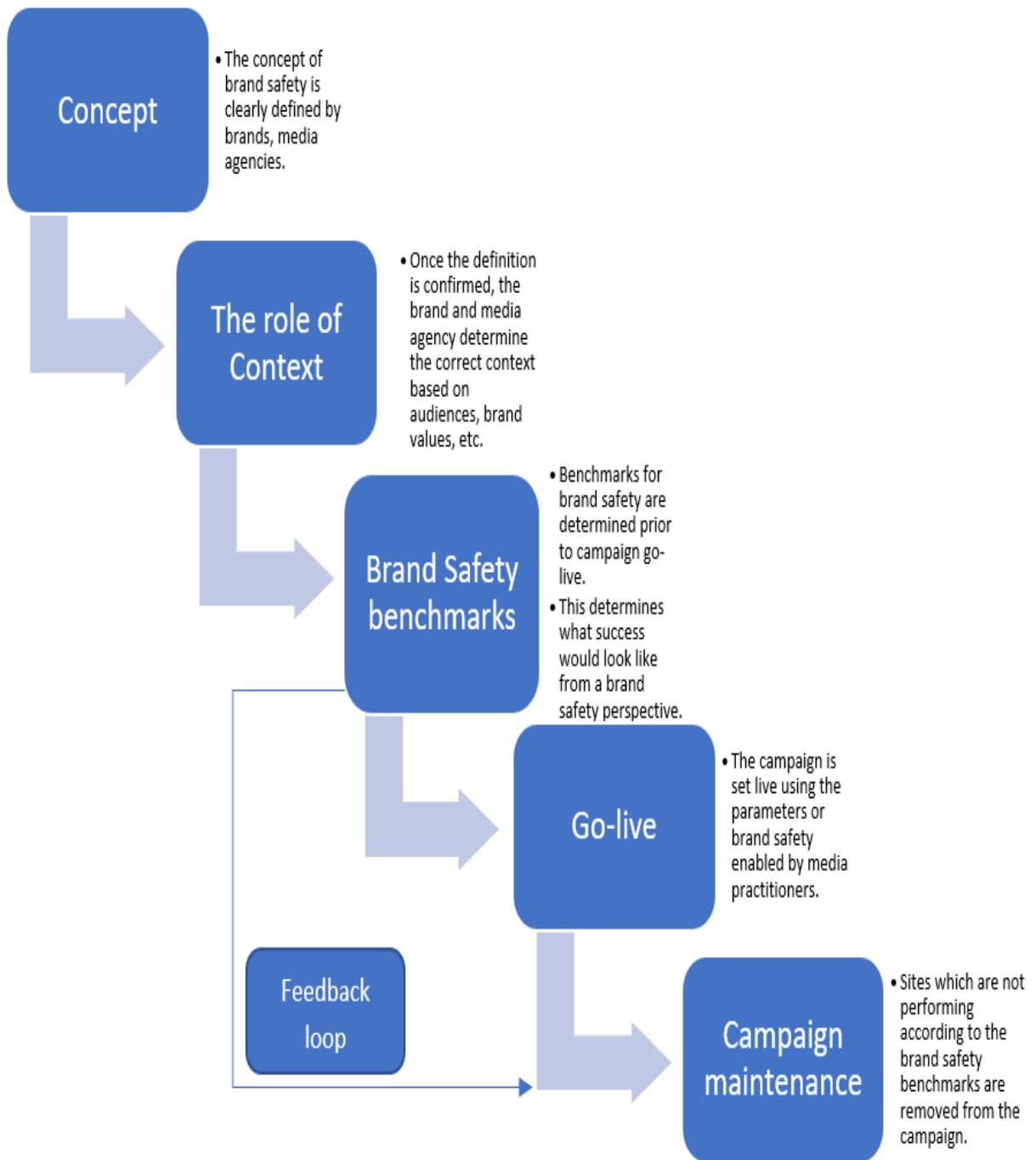


Figure 6.1: The process of brand safety

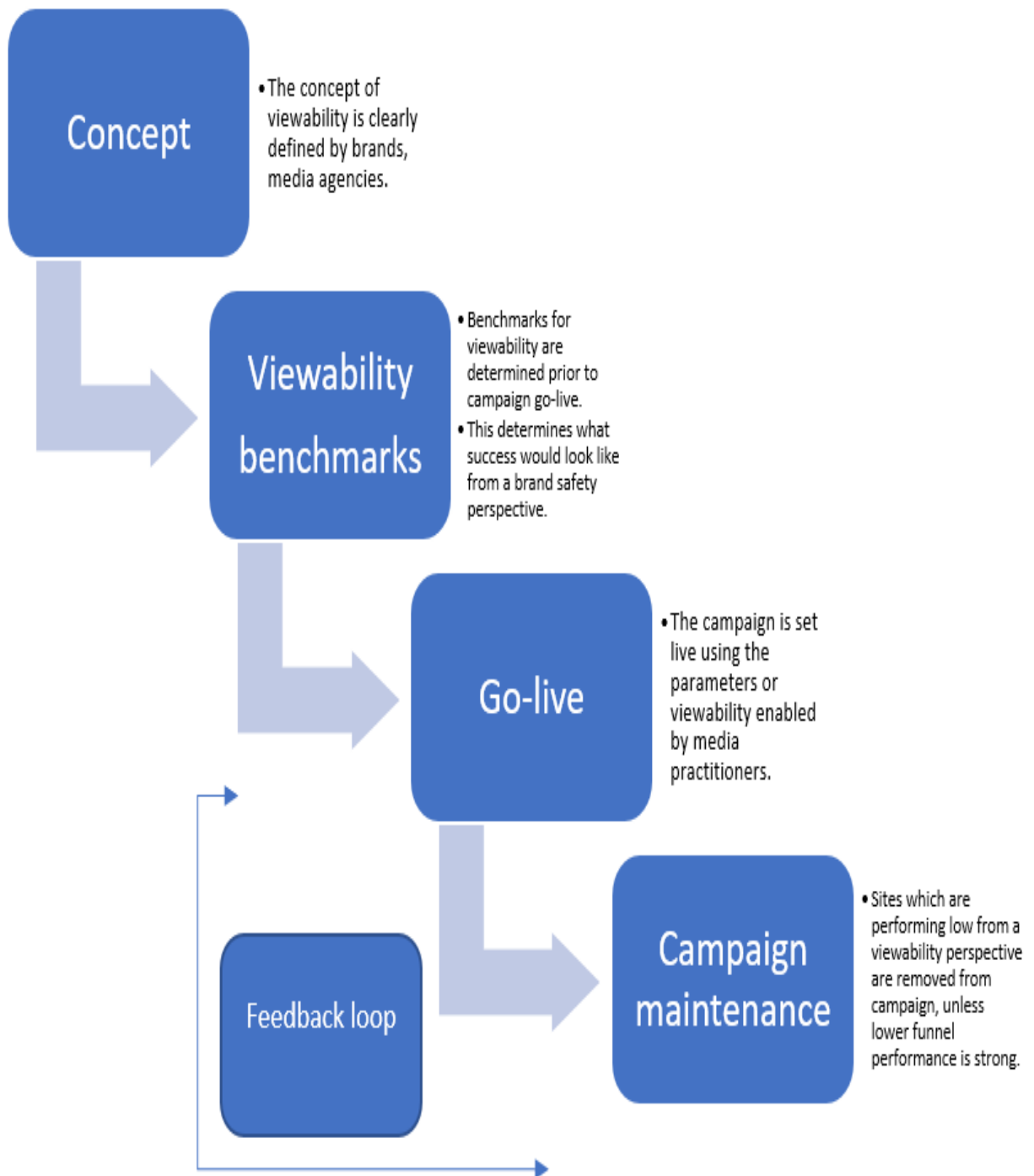


Figure 6.2: The process of viewability

6.3. Brand Safety

6.3.1. The concept of digital brand safety

According to the participants, the concept of brand safety involves maintaining the brand's reputation online and keeping to the core values of the brand in the online environment. Therefore, in this case, the definition of brand safety was confirmed according to the *IAB SA White Paper on brand safety* (IAB SA, 2018). However, a theme not included in the *IAB SA*

White Papers was the fluidity of this concept. As marketers and media agencies try to keep up with the shifts in audience behaviour and environmental changes, what is deemed safe for a brand to align with could change over time. Keeping up to date with the categories and content considered safe by the target audience would ensure that the brand's reputation remains intact. Therefore, this study would recommend that brands regularly research and determine which categories and content they should align with. As shown in Figure 7.1, this is the first step in the process of brand safety, as this concept is defined for brands and will shape the boundaries of their digital campaigns.

6.3.2. The role of context in digital brand safety

According to the participants, the reason why marketers and media agency professionals selected certain contexts for their digital advertisements was suitability, audiences and audience negative behaviour.

As determined in the findings of this study, the *IAB SA White Paper on brand safety* shows a strong correlation between the values of the brand and environments in which its advertisements appear, and this is confirmed. However, what is not mentioned in the *IAB SA White Paper on brand safety* is the negative behaviour of the audience, and how this can lead to advertisements being shown in the incorrect environments. Therefore, this study would recommend that brands clearly outline which environments and contexts would be key to target audiences, and which environments should be avoided.

6.3.3. The selection of sites to display advertisements

According to participants, audiences are a key factor in deciding which sites to communicate on when determining the correct context in which to display its advertisements. Audience sizes, campaign objectives, brand safety and the perception of the site were key considerations for participants. The *IAB SA White Paper on brand safety* does not note the selection of sites being factored in from audience size, campaign objective, brand safety and site perception points of view. In this study, it would be critical for media practitioners and brand custodians to consider the factors of audience size, campaign objectives, brand safety and site perception when favouring sites for online campaigns.

6.3.4. Programmatic buying and views on this medium

The majority of participants in the study confirmed that programmatic buying is incorporated into their digital campaigns. This can be seen as confirmation of the popularity of this buying method, noted in the literature review above. The advantages of using this method have been the primary focus of participants, noting the effectiveness, innovation, improved reach,

efficiencies, closer campaign control, and increased touchpoints that programmatic buying allows.

The above confirms the *IAB SA White Paper on brand safety* regarding programmatic buying, highlighting its vast capabilities, but also noting that it requires close control by media implementation personnel. Therefore, when using programmatic buying for digital campaigns, this study would advise implementing the necessary controls which ensure the campaign is optimised to reach its objectives best and that this is achieved in a brand-safe environment.

6.3.5. Precautionary measures taken to avoid being placed in the incorrect context

Site lists, human control and trusting in their media agency were listed by participants as the key measures used to avoid advertisements being placed in the wrong environments. These have been noted in the *IAB SA White Paper on brand safety*; therefore, it is confirmed. However, marketers placing their trust in their media agency to ensure the brand's digital campaigns are placed in the correct online environments has not been mentioned in the *IAB SA White Paper on brand safety*.

This study would note that it is recommended for media practitioners to build a strong relationship with their clients, and to proactively counter negative online situations for the brand to avoid.

6.3.6. Why brands make use of certain costing models

Campaign objectives, the format used for online campaigns and brand life stage were the most frequently cited claims for the reason behind using costing models for digital campaigns. These themes were prominent in the responses from participants. However, these were not a focus in the *IAB SA White Paper on brand safety*. It is important to note the reasoning behind why brands and their media agencies make use of certain buying methods for digital campaigns.

6.3.7. Measures taken if a campaign is not performing well in terms of brand safety

Most participants responded that they relied on their digital team to investigate and rectify, while another frequently raised theme was that the campaign was to be removed from the low-performing sites, as well as regular site lists pulled by digital campaign managers. This concurred with points raised in the *IAB SA White Paper on brand safety*. However, it is key to note the digital teams' responsibility in maintaining acceptable brand safety levels in campaigns.

6.3.8. Categories which would be considered safe for some of the brands

Participants confirmed that the 13 categories noted in the *White Paper* were unsafe for their brands. One interviewee, however, said that one of the categories was acceptable (tobacco; as the participant advertised a brand in this category), and both points of view confirm the *IAB SA White Paper* theory.

The category which the interviewee regarded as safe was in the same industry. Therefore, it is evident that considerations of brand safety would be relative to the brand and category of which it forms a part.

6.3.9. Categories to be added to the “unsafe categories” list

Themes which were noted as unsafe included countries at war and terrorism, cults and survivalism, incentivised traffic, biased content (race and gender), and underage content. These are not mentioned in the 13 categories listed in the *IAB SA White Paper on brand safety*. Therefore, this study would recommend that the above-listed categories be included as part of the conventional unsafe categories list.

7.3.10. The process of brand safety begins with the client

The majority of participants in this study agreed with this statement that the client should indeed drive the implementation of brand safety and guide this process. However, many participants recognised the importance of marketers working closely with their media partners, including their media agencies and media owners.

This study would thus recommend that each party recognise the role it plays in ensuring the campaign is brand safe. This is mirrored by the *IAB SA White Paper on brand safety*. However, certain clients might not be digitally mature, and therefore, it would be up to the media agency to guide this process with the marketer, to ensure the brand’s advertisements do not fall into unsafe environments.

6.3.11. Universal concerns regarding video advertising

Context was one of the key concerns which participants confirmed when it came to video advertising. User-generated content and attention quality were mentioned as well. However, these concerns were not highlighted specifically when it came to brand safety relating to video campaigns. This study would recommend that marketers and media professionals alike

observe these measures, seeing the rise of video campaigns in digital marketing and the importance of this format when it comes to storytelling.

6.3.12. Methods used to safeguard brand safety when advertising via video

Blocklists and context were the prevailing themes from the participants in terms of methods that were used to safeguard their video campaigns from being displayed in incorrect environments. Further recommendations included human control, keyword targeting, that the precautions used were like those for non-video placements, implementing 3rd party verification, avoiding user-generated content, following compliance, trusting media agencies to follow best practices, ensuring all parties have vetted the creative as well as the media placement, and ensuring the local guidelines are followed.

The *IAB SA White Paper on brand safety* has not offered a guide to practice brand safety, specifically for video campaigns. Therefore, in this study, a measure to enhance brand safety for video campaigns should be provided using the above recommendations.

6.3.13. Brand safety technology and its impact on the reach achieved

According to participants, brand safety technology does affect the amount of reach that an advertising campaign might have. However, this is not necessarily a bad thing, as the reputation of the brand would be of utmost importance for brand custodians. There was also a call for media owners to be held more accountable for aligning advertisements with brand-safe contexts.

The *IAB SA White Paper on brand safety* does not confirm the impact of brand safety technology on the reach a campaign might achieve. However, considering that reach is an important metric for many marketers and media professionals, these observations can be helpful for media practitioners.

6.3.14. The concern of brand safety when building awareness

Brand safety was a concern when it came to building brand awareness in the minds of consumers for the majority of participants. The reason behind this being a concern was that it affects how the brand is perceived.

Further observations offered by participants included that it is necessary to move users down the funnel; because the campaign objective is awareness it doesn't mean association and quality should suffer; while smaller brands may not be concerned about brand safety when building awareness, that if the audience interacts with unsafe content, they might be the

incorrect audience; the consumer might be desensitised to the environment; and the campaign can be optimised for awareness after the brand safety measures have been implemented.

The *IAB SA White Paper on brand safety* does not mention the impact of brand safety and its potential relationship in terms of building brand awareness in the minds of consumers.

6.4. Viewability

6.4.1. The concept of viewability

When it comes to the participants' definition on the concept of brand safety, there was a large portion who defined this concept as the awareness of an advertisement. Regarding the concept of viewability, participants also made the following statements: 50% of advertisement pixels are in-view, that a brand wants 100% viewability, that it is a digital objective which might not necessarily translate to a marketing benchmark, that it is more focused towards an upper funnel metric and that it is a platform metric, not one which focusses on human behaviour.

There are a few of these mentioned in the *IAB SA White Paper on Viewability*; however, the definition provided focuses on the technical definition, while industry professionals have simplified this to audiences being aware of their advertisements. Therefore, this study would recommend that brands and their media partners clearly define on their own terms what viewability means, and then work towards these as a benchmark for digital campaigns.

6.4.2. The impact of having a benchmark score for brand safety and viewability on campaign performance

Participants confirmed that having a benchmark score for brand safety and viewability meant a better quality of advertising campaign for their brand. Participants also noted that having a benchmark score for these metrics is based on the relationship built with client; it increases efficiency; viewability has a correlation with attention metrics; and that it enables there to be a definition for what a successful campaign looks like.

These are not communicated in the *IAB SA White Paper on Viewability*. Therefore, this study would recommend that media agencies and brands have benchmark scores for their digital campaigns, as this would lead to better quality campaigns overall.

6.4.3. Measures taken if a client's brand is not performing well with regards to viewability

The majority of those in the study confirmed that if a brand is not performing well on sites with regards to viewability scores, they would remove the site from their campaign. Another theme that was apparent to numerous participants was that it would be imperative to confirm the site metrics and whether a poorly performing site would be the wrong site to be on moving forward. Therefore this study would recommend that if necessary, sites with low viewability scores should be removed from a campaign.

6.4.4. The link between programmatic advertising and viewability

Numerous participants confirmed the link between programmatic advertising and viewability achieved. The majority of participants noted that this form of advertising focused on efficiency and less so on the impact of a campaign. This study would then recommend that when using programmatic advertising as a form of buying, that this method should mainly be used for efficient performance.

6.4.5. The relationship between the costing model and viewability score achieved

This study confirmed that there is a relationship between the costing model used in a campaign and the viewability score attained. Participants in this study confirmed that there is a link between the CPC and CPV costing models and the viewability score achieved.

The *IAB SA White Paper* does not comment on the relationship between the costing model and viewability. Therefore, this study would recommend that there is a link between these aspects, however, the campaign's objective should also be contemplated. For example, if a campaign is bought on a CPC basis and is performing strongly with regards to clicks, but is seeing low viewability, then it would be a good choice to keep the campaign on the website in question.

6.4.6. The concern of viewability when it comes to building awareness

The majority of participants confirmed that with regard to building awareness, viewability indeed is a concern. Further, it is imperative that the target audience sees advertisements, therefore viewability would be a key metric for brands.

This study would recommend that viewability scores be factored into account for all awareness campaigns, with benchmarks incorporated to enhance the overall quality of the campaign.

6.4.7. The role of advertisement formats in the viewability rating

Participants confirmed that there are different viewability benchmarks based on the ad format for a campaign. Therefore, videos would have different viewability benchmarks to display banners for digital campaigns. There were participants who suggested that larger formats have seen better viewability scores, which in turn could lead to better awareness achieved. This study would therefore recommend that the various ad formats have different benchmarks pertaining to viewability and that larger formats be preferred when it comes to digital campaigns.

6.4.8. Brand reputation

In terms of viewability and awareness, this is a concern for participants when trying to build awareness of a brand.

For brand safety, participants have also confirmed that this is a concern when building brand awareness.

Therefore, for participants in the study it is confirmed that both topics are important to consider when building awareness.

Furthermore, brand awareness is the first step to building associations to the brand and ultimately the reputation of the brand and the topics of viewability and brand safety are key for building awareness of a brand and therefore can affect how consumers see a brand.

6.5. Conclusion and further research

The research objectives were to determine if there is a link between the *IAB SA White Papers* (IAB SA, 2018; 2019), and media practitioner's experience in the SA media landscape. These objectives were achieved through this study, as various points shared by the *IAB SA White Papers* were confirmed by media practitioners' experience in the brand safety and viewability fields, while further points were raised coming from the experience of media experts which the *IAB SA White Papers* did not contain.

Further study should be made on the topic of attention, as noted by a respondent, whereby viewability could be termed a machine metric, not a human behaviour metric such as attention. This shifts the focus from media partners and optimisation regarding viewability to the consumer, and channels to which the audience is most likely to give more attention.

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APPENDIX A: Interview guide

Section 1: Qualifying questions

1.1. Do you work in the media/marketing industry in South Africa?

Yes No

If 1.1. is answered "No", thank the participant and replace with the next participant.

1.2. Which marketing/media sector do you work in?

Client-side Media agency Creative agency

Other (please specify) _____

Section 2: Digital brand safety

2.1. Please can you define the concept of digital brand safety in your own words?

2.2. How does context of your digital advertisements play a role for your/your client's brands? (*"your brand" = refers to brand owner/manager, etc., "your client's brand" refers to those acting as custodians of the brand, digital agencies, etc.*)

2.3. How do you determine which sites/networks your/your client's online advertisements are displayed on?

2.4.1. Does your business for purchase online inventory programmatically?

Yes

No

2.4.2. What are your views on programmatic advertising?

2.5. Which precautionary measures do you take to avoid your advertisements being placed in the incorrect context which may damage your/your client's brand?

2.6.1. Which costing model does your/your client's brand more widely used for their online advertising?

CPM CPC CPV

Other (please specify)

2.6.2 Why does your brand make use of this costing model?

2.7. Which measures are taken if your/your client's brand is not performing well on certain sites with regards to brand safety?

2.8. According to the *IAB SA White Paper on brand safety in today's digital context (2018)*, the 13 categories below have been named as categories to avoid for digital advertising.

1. Military conflict	<input type="checkbox"/>	8. Death/injury	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Obscenity	<input type="checkbox"/>	9. Online piracy	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Drugs	<input type="checkbox"/>	10. Hate speech	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Tobacco	<input type="checkbox"/>	11. Terrorism	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Adult	<input type="checkbox"/>	12. Spam/harmful sites	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Arms	<input type="checkbox"/>	13. Fake news	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Crime	<input type="checkbox"/>		

2.8.1. Which, if any, would be considered safe for your/your client's brand? Please tick off in the boxes above.

2.8.2. Which categories, if any, would you add to the above list?

2.9. According to the *IAB SA White Paper on Brand Safety in today's digital context* (2018), it is up to the marketer to begin the process of brand safety. What are your thoughts about this statement?

2.10. What are some of the universal concerns around video advertising that a marketer should be aware of?

2.11. Which methods do you use in order to safeguard for brand safety when advertising via video?

2.12. How does brand safety technology affect the reach a campaign might have?

2.13.1. For the main goal of building awareness in the minds of consumers, is brand safety a concern?

Yes No

2.13.2. Explain your answer in 2.13.1.

3. Viewability

3.1. Please could you define the concept of viewability in your own words?

3.2.1. Does your brand/client have a brand safety and viewability benchmark score for online campaigns?

Yes No

3.2.2. How does having a benchmark score for brand safety and viewability affect campaign performance?

3.3. What measures are taken if your/your client's brand is not performing well on certain sites with regards to viewability?

3.4 What is your experience regarding the link between programmatic advertising and viewability?

3.5. What relationship is there between the costing model used in a digital campaign (CPM, CPC, CPV, etc) and the viewability score achieved?

3.6.1. For the main goal of building awareness in the minds of consumers, is a viewability concern?

Yes No

3.6.2. Please explain your answer in 3.6.1.

3.7. How does the ad format play a role in the potential viewability rating?